

Collegiate Debating Societies in New Zealand:  
The Role of Discourse  
in an Inter-Colonial Setting, 1878-1902

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*To  
Brunhild, Andrea und Peter Kaiser,  
Elisabet Pehl  
and  
Francis Zinke.*

*Man is 'the heir of all the ages'; he cannot divest himself of his patrimony and  
begin the world again.*

John Macmillan Brown, 1881, 13

## **Abstract**

### **Collegiate Debating Societies in New Zealand: The Role of Discourse in an Inter-Colonial Setting, 1878-1902**

By Bettina Kaiser

This thesis examines how, in New Zealand during the nineteenth century, debate was practised as an educative means to cultivate a standard of civic participation among settlers. Three collegiate debating societies and their activities between 1878 and 1902 are the object of this study. The discussion of these three New Zealand societies yields a distinctly colonial concept of debate. In the New Zealand public forum, a predominantly Pakeha intellectual elite put forth the position that public decisions should be determined by a process of deliberation that was conducted by educated individuals. This project was dominated by scientific argumentation that underpinned debate as a reliable means of discursive interaction. New Zealand's intellectual elite was influenced by similar trends in Britain and the United States. Moreover, the concept of debate, that developed over the period of thirty years, carried significant normative connotations that rendered rational argumentation an acceptable form of discursive interaction.

It is shown that nineteenth-century debating practice in New Zealand should be understood as a cultural phenomenon that combines the practice of debate with alternative forms of discursive interaction like mock trials or musical evenings. Mostly composed of students, these societies negotiated ideal standards of discourse and real encounters on the debating platform. In order to understand this relation of real and ideal in nineteenth-century discourse, Habermas's theory of communicative action helps to identify levels of interaction that reveal the social structure of debating activity. In addition, this thesis discusses events of imperial dimension like the Boer War and the Australia Federation movement to locate students' discourse in an inter-colonial setting and identify discursive patterns of colonial policy making. Due to the lack of rhetorical research in New Zealand, American scholarship on literary and debating societies in the Gilded Age era provide a frame of reference for this study.

The story of nineteenth-century New Zealand was written in an inter-colonial web of written and oral discourse. As such, the understanding of a distinctly New Zealand nineteenth-century concept of debate contributes to a shift of perspective in New Zealand historical research towards a rhetorical interpretation of discourse culture. Furthermore, this study informs a reading of New Zealand's past that takes into account the strategic function of public discourse and its effect on the creation of jingoism and grounds for national identification.

This thesis concludes that nineteenth-century debate was an imagined and ideal standard imposed on the public forum as well as a lived and embodied experience of social interaction. While this thesis focuses on the activities of three debating societies, it is suggested that literary and debating societies, in general, were more numerous and influential than historical scholarship has acknowledged.

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## Abbreviations

<i>AUCC</i>	<i>Auckland University College Calendar</i>
AUDS	Auckland University Debating Society
<i>CCC</i>	<i>Canterbury College Calendar</i>
CCDS	Canterbury College Dialectic Society
<i>CCR</i>	<i>Canterbury College Review</i>
CMDR	Canterbury Museum Documentary Research
CPL	Christchurch Public Library
<i>DNZB</i>	<i>Dictionary of New Zealand Biography</i>
Hocken	Hocken Library, Dunedin
<i>JNZS</i>	<i>The Journal of New Zealand Science</i>
<i>LT</i>	<i>Lyttelton Times</i>
MBL	Macmillan Brown Library
<i>NZH</i>	<i>New Zealand Herald</i>
<i>NZIM</i>	<i>New Zealand Illustrated Magazine</i>
<i>NZJH</i>	<i>New Zealand Journal of History</i>
<i>NZUC</i>	<i>New Zealand University Calendar</i>
<i>OED</i>	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
<i>OUC</i>	<i>Otago University Calendar</i>
OU DS	Otago University Debating Society
<i>OUR</i>	<i>Otago University Review</i>
<i>OW</i>	<i>Otago Witness</i>
SCUA	Special Collection, University of Auckland
<i>TCA</i>	<i>The Theory of Communicative Action</i>
<i>TPNZI</i>	<i>Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute</i>

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## **Introduction**

In his essay, “Televised Leaders’ Debates”, Stephen Church claims that in New Zealand “debate is a perpetual feature of democracy, as both precursor and reaction to decision making” (Church 2004, 159). Few would disagree, particularly in the political arena. American election campaigns, for example, employ presidential debates as crucial elements of their strategic pursuits. Australia and New Zealand have followed in America’s footsteps and have established televised leaders’ debates as a requisite feature of their election campaigns. As in Church’s statement, they are frequently promoted as part of the public “decision making” process. Undeniably, televised presidential debates influence the outcome of an election because of the effect they exert on the political decision of a mass audience. Leaders’ debates have an impact on voting behaviour and, as a consequence, Church suggests that in New Zealand public debate routinely popularises democratic values and thus lends political participation an appearance of credibility. In other words, political leader debates are part of New Zealand’s political culture because they enhance the exchange of opinions in a process of national decision making.

In New Zealand, the belief in debate as a democratic means of knowledge production also permeates the specialised discourse of science. Pratt, for example, identifies processes of decision-making in public scientific discourse by emphasising the role of public debate. In an attempt to define how the New Zealand public negotiates knowledge, Pratt argues that reliable scientific truths emerge from a consensus viewpoint that is generated by a community that constantly exchanges information and opinions. He maintains that “coherent independent lines of evidence” (Pratt 2004, 223) in the public forum are best suited to convince the New Zealand population of the social

relevance of scientific studies.<sup>1</sup> Church and Pratt are convinced that popular debate, whether the topic is politics or science, contributes to processes of democratic opinion formation. Moreover, both seem to suggest that these methods of either political campaigning or scientific communication are conducive to public consensus-formation and the establishment of universally valid public truths.

The current positions of Pratt and Church stem from a practice of debate that was central to nineteenth-century New Zealand discourse formation. Late-Victorian collegiate debate was based on the conviction that public decisions should be determined by a process of deliberation conducted by educated individuals. Moreover, the practice of public debate in late nineteenth-century New Zealand suggests that scientific argumentation underpinned debate as a reliable means of discursive interaction. The idea of debate as crucial to the communicative mechanism of the colony has largely been neglected by historians in New Zealand and Australia. For the Australian literary and debating societies, Drinkwater observes that “[t]he contribution of these societies to nineteenth-century Australian political culture has been largely overlooked, but their records are indispensable sources for understanding community” (Drinkwater 1999, 393). While a few scholars of cultural history in New Zealand engage with theories of discourse formation, research on the significance of public communication and the use of rhetoric in the late-Victorian era is almost non-existent.<sup>2</sup>

In particular, collegiate debate and the existence of literary and debating societies in nineteenth-century settler communities either are discussed in isolation from late-

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<sup>1</sup> The phrase “public forum” is taken from Zarefsky’s manual *Public Speaking*. Zarefsky denotes “a space (imagined, rather than physical) in which citizens gather to discuss issues affecting them” (Zarefsky 2005, 442). In view of the critical attention paid to the concept of separate public and private spheres, I employ this phrase as an integrative expression. While the public forum in our century emerges in spaces like the internet that give it a different quality compared to the nineteenth century, communication in late-Victorian New Zealand similarly combined physical and imagined spaces – as Tony Ballantyne has shown and I argue in the Introduction and Chapter one.

<sup>2</sup> Stenhouse 1985, 1990, 1996, 1999; Gibbons 1992, 1998, 2002; Hilliard, 2002; McKenzie 1985. For the twentieth century, Brookes provides a detailed study of Germaine Greer’s visit to New Zealand. Brookes sets languages use and audience perception in relation to cultural realities in order to understand the dynamics that created the Greer phenomenon (Brookes 2006).

Victorian club culture or are dismissed as irrelevant for New Zealand's colonial history. Scholars of academic history consider debating societies as a phenomenon of student culture but fail to set it into the larger context of rhetorical public culture in New Zealand.<sup>3</sup> Morrell, for example, merely records that the Otago University debating society was "founded in June 1878 with thirty-one financial members and George Montgomery as secretary and treasurer" (Morrell 1969, 76). Their existence is mostly seen as a precursor or affiliation to larger student bodies like the Associations and as a reflection of student life rather than an exemplification of the formation of social knowledge. For authors of historical biographies, debating presents but a passing stage in their subject's career.<sup>4</sup> Occasionally, literary and debating societies in the colony are considered insignificant on grounds of their mere number (Fairburn 1989, 181). Some historians of education pay attention to the potential of debating societies but see them as the offspring of mutual improvement societies without regarding them as discursive units in a web of imperial communication. For Thompson, in *Adult Education*, debating is integral to the practice of Mechanics' Institutes, yet he fails to account for the role of debate in the various institutes' syllabi (Thompson 1945). Meanwhile Dakin focuses on the activities of mutual improvement societies in New Zealand and unravels the British influences behind the founding of such societies in New Zealand. His perspective, however, remains restricted to education (Dakin 1986, 1987, 1991).

Scholars of scientific discourse in New Zealand have acknowledged the significance of the late-Victorian societies and associations for the production of scientific knowledge and public information. In particular, Stenhouse and Reid discuss the function of scientific argumentation in colonial public discourse culture. On the one hand, Reid's study focuses on the influence that the New Zealand Institute generated in

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<sup>3</sup> Barrowman 1999, 12-13; Hercok 1994, 5; Hight & Candy 1927, 143-144; Morrell 1969, 76; Murray 1924, 196-198; Page 1992, 108; Sinclair 1983, 65.

<sup>4</sup> Roth 1952, 5, 21; Lovell-Smith 2004, 34-35; Baxter 1981, 15-16.

order to become the dominant association of New Zealand's scientists.<sup>5</sup> On the other, Stenhouse's analysis of Darwinism in New Zealand shows that colonial culture was embedded in an imperial scientific network that went beyond the communication of the individual branches of the Institute and into the public forum. Both convincingly argue that scientific discourse in the colony was as much a process of public communication as of political manoeuvring. As such, scientific debate permeated New Zealand's discourse culture and influenced the way public knowledge was produced. Gibbons and Hilliard complement these studies by identifying processes of interaction among the different information media.<sup>6</sup> Their work, like Stenhouse's and Reid's takes into account the significance of inter-colonial and imperial information networks for the creation of a public forum that sustains opinion formation among individuals.

Other historians have added to the understanding of inter-colonial information processes and have extended the terminological framework beyond available resources of discourse analysis. In Ballantyne's and Moloughney's volume *Disputed Histories*, Miles Fairburn argues that "Australian, British and American stimuli ... probably made New Zealand the most globalised society in the world" (Fairburn 2006, 150-151).<sup>7</sup> Ballantyne advances this perspective by adding a distinctly Asia-Pacific perspective.<sup>8</sup> For him, the global perspective on colonial history allows us to conceptualise discourse

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<sup>5</sup> Stenhouse 1985, 1990, 1996, 1999; Reid 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Gibbons 1992, 1998, 2002; Hilliard 2002.

<sup>7</sup> I agree with Fairburn that New Zealand history needs a new perspective that allows it to position itself in a context of world or "globalised" history. However, I do not accept Fairburn's argument for New Zealand's exceptionalism that he develops in the same essay, and which claims that New Zealand acquired an exceptional historical status because it was like no other country simultaneously influenced by Australian, British and American culture. Fairburn argues that "New Zealand's exceptionalism, hence, was the product of a force that prevented distinct traditions from growing in the local soil" (Fairburn 2006, 150). In contrast to this position, this thesis shows that New Zealanders actively created distinct debating traditions and that overseas cultural influences were conducive rather than detrimental for this phenomenon. I also do not share his early belief that New Zealanders were mostly isolated individuals who, as a consequence, lived in an atomized colonial society (Fairburn 1982). Instead, my research illustrates that New Zealand's urban society, on the one hand, consisted of well-organised communities that provided a relatively stable social framework and, on the other, allowed the individual to be mobile and international beyond the boundaries of an English-speaking cultural sphere.

<sup>8</sup> Sinclair and Belich publish on Australasian issues. (Sinclair 1986, 1987b; Belich 2003) Ballantyne, for example, develops his argument in 2002a, 2002b, 2006a with Moloughney.

beyond the confines of the nation-state.<sup>9</sup> Central to Ballantyne's work, in sharp contrast to Fairburn's understanding of "globalised" and "atomised" society, is the idea that different modes of discourse were "constructed out of a complex web of circulation" (Ballantyne 2002b, 131), in which the New Zealand intellectual community actively participated. In *Orientalism and Race*, Ballantyne interprets New Zealand's colonial discourse in a context of imperial knowledge production that places the colony within rather than at the periphery of the British Empire (Ballantyne 2002a). According to Ballantyne's suggestions, the colony had voice that was heard among many in the Empire. Indeed, nineteenth-century debaters themselves located their activities in inter-colonial and even global contexts. In 1892, Professor Gilray in addressing the Otago University debating society in Dunedin, "emphasised the importance of such institutions as the debating unions or societies which are formed in connection with the universities throughout the world" (*OW*, 9 June 1892, 18). This branch of New Zealand scholarship adopts a perspective that sees New Zealand society functioning in Asia-Pacific and international contexts and effectively sets New Zealand research in a global trend in historical writing that departs from concepts like the nation-state.<sup>10</sup> Recently, Thomas Bender has repositioned American cultural history as world history.<sup>11</sup> Beginning with his work on American intellectualism and its relation to urban culture,<sup>12</sup> Bender shows that the United States became part "of the larger, ever changing European work of empire that began in the fifteenth century" (Bender 2006, 191). Bender and Ballantyne are representative of a group of scholars who set out to rewrite national history in terms of a global understanding of cultural influences.

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<sup>9</sup> Ballantyne 2002b, 129-131; 2005b. In 2003, Gibbons also calls for a "decentralisation" of New Zealand history and its re-interpretation as world history (Gibbons 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Ballantyne and Moloughney write in *Disputed Histories* that this scholarship "remind[s] us of the chronological, spatial, and cultural limits of the nation and that it should not be viewed as the natural site for historical analysis" (Ballantyne and Moloughney 2006a, 23).

<sup>11</sup> Bender 2006; Cinar and Bender 2007.

<sup>12</sup> Bender 1987, 1988, 1993.

Debating in nineteenth-century New Zealand was embedded in an inter-colonial context that requires an analytical framework that locates the colony in this global network and takes it seriously as discursive practice on a colonial as well as global level. In New Zealand, debating societies functioned as cells of knowledge production, which makes them a valuable source for research on New Zealand's discourse culture. Not only were New Zealand debating societies embedded in an inter-colonial context, they were also immersed in an imperial network of similar institutions. Individual members were considerably mobile and commuted between Britain, Germany, America and Australia. Many of the students, after pursuing their research overseas and joining similar associations there, returned to the colony and remained affiliated to their first collegiate debating society. In 1898, Earnest Rutherford wrote to James Hight from Montreal that he would "always retain a very pleasant recollection of many Saturday evenings spent at the Dialectic Society" and he hoped "when I again visit New Zealand to renew my acquaintance with the society" (E. Rutherford to J. Hight, letter, Hight Papers).<sup>13</sup> Some members transferred to other university colleges within New Zealand. Sir Apirana Ngata (1874-1950), one of New Zealand's exceptional Maori scholars and politicians, enrolled at Canterbury and Auckland and became a member of both clubs.<sup>14</sup>

Despite these inter-colonial connections, debating societies and universities were the breeding grounds of an influential intellectual elite that had an eminent influence on the

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<sup>13</sup> Another member, Oscar J.T. Alpers, observed that "I have always been able to maintain some degree of connection with it [Canterbury College], to keep its memories fresh, and its friendships unbroken" (Alpers et al. 1923, xviii). His relation to the College resulted in the publication of *Cheerful Yesterday*, *College Rhymes* and *Jubilee Book of Canterbury Rhymes*. Alpers, after his graduation, practised law in New Zealand, became judge of the Supreme Court, and continued to pursue his literary interest.

<sup>14</sup> Ngata went to Waioamatatini Native School, followed by Te Aute College, where he prepared for university matriculation. The A Te Makarini Scholarship enabled him to take up his studies at Canterbury College where in 1893, he completed his B.A. degree. After moving to Auckland, he finished his LL.B. in 1896. Ngata became the first Maori to complete a university degree in New Zealand. After his graduation he challenged the economic and social situation of Maori in New Zealand. From 1905 to 1943, Sir Apirana Ngata occupied the Eastern Maori parliamentary seat. Between 1907 and 1908, he sat on the Native Land Commission together with chief justice Sir Robert Stout. In 1927, Ngata received the knighthood and the following year became native minister. In 1934 he resigned from cabinet. The biographical account is based on Walker's biography of Ngata 2001, Sorrenson in DNZB, Sorrenson 1986, 1:11-38. Chapters one and four contain more information on Ngata's role in the collegiate debating societies.

future politics, cultural representation and self-perception of the colony. Students in their later careers entered colonial politics, shaped the educational sphere of New Zealand or flocked to the law. These educated individuals acquired their argumentation skills in such institutions and associations. To disregard their activities as socially insignificant, at least in their formative years, does not give credit to the achievements of this generation of New Zealanders. The analysis of the proceedings of debating societies broadens the horizon of inter-colonial communication that draws on a global framework for New Zealand's nineteenth-century history. At the same time, basic research of collegiate debating societies in New Zealand is, inescapably, an analysis of Pakeha culture rather than an attempt at locating discursive culture in a bicultural framework of Maori-Pakeha relations. Nineteenth-century higher education in New Zealand was the project of a white intellectual elite. This thesis explores how this project shaped debating and public discourse culture.

While New Zealand lacks research in the history of rhetoric and argumentation studies, American scholarship proves that public debates, associations like literary and debating societies, and institutions like lyceums and Chautauqua, are rich sources for cultural as well as discourse history.<sup>15</sup> Several studies confirm the educational objectives of these American cultural institutions. McHenry shows that societies' archives provide evidence of processes of transition from written to oral communication

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<sup>15</sup> Zarefsky studies the Lincoln-Douglas debates in relation to their ideological potential in ante-bellum America (Zarefsky 1990). In particular, Angela Ray establishes the significance of the ante-bellum lyceum movement (Ray 2003, 2004, 2005). She regards lyceums as associations designed to promote group identities of privileged strata of the American public. Martin shows the impact of women's study clubs on American public culture (Martin 1987). Mastrangelo investigates politics of debate at Mount Holyoke College (Mastrangelo 1999). McHenry studies the proceedings of African American Literary Societies (McHenry 2002). Cerling relates the rise of debate and public speaking to the gradual decline of rhetoric at American universities and colleges (Cerling 1985, 189-200). Wiesepe discusses the position of literary and debating societies in Texas (Wiesepe 2004). Tapia traces the development of Chautauqua from a forum for mutual improvement to an entertainment business (Tapia 1997). Early research focuses on the description of proceedings without assessing the discursive implications of particular uses of argument, rules and topics (Cowperthwaite and Baird 1954, Harding 1971, Hellmann 1942, Johnson 1972, Porter 1936, Potter 1944, 1954, 1963, Simpson 1976, and Tilton 1920). All agree that the heyday of American debate and oratory had already passed when New Zealand's literary and debating societies were established.



(McHenry 2002). In particular, the minutes of debates record occasions of actual argumentation patterns by people who were not trained to appear in public but who pursued oratory, debate and essay composition as a pastime. According to Wiesepape, the American clubs produced a substantial amount of popular literary work that contributed to the cultivation of literary taste (Wiesepape 2004). McHenry shows that literary and debating clubs increased literacy among the African American population. She argues that “in fostering the development of a literate population, literary societies furthered the evolution of a black public sphere and a politically conscious society” (McHenry 2002, 3). As a consequence, Wiesepape and McHenry conclude that these societies fulfilled a vital function in the networks of American public discourse. By contrast, Ray portrays ante-bellum men’s debating societies as places of social interaction with little potential of contributing to a public pool of knowledge (Ray 2003, 2004). Ray in particular uncovers the significance of ritualised discourse for the existence of debating societies. As a consequence, these studies of the rhetorical history of the United States identify processes of formalisation and social interaction as the two key dynamics that formed the practice of public debate.

This thesis acknowledges this scholarship and propounds the argument that, in New Zealand, both processes—formalisation and intellectual interaction—acted upon debaters within a time span of thirty years and shaped debating processes in a way unique to New Zealand. On the one hand, students in New Zealand started their debating adventure on fresh grounds with British and American points of reference that indicated a general direction rather than specific procedures for the practice of debate. On the other, gradually, with the institutionalisation of higher education and with improved global information flows, collegiate debating in New Zealand was formalised to a degree that rendered it unfit for fostering communicative connections between students and the colonial public. While this process confined debate to the academic

sphere, it also preserved it as a form of specialised discourse among well trained participants. As a consequence, debate as a form of argumentative exchange survived as an additional extra-curricular component at New Zealand's colleges while public literary and debating societies died a slow death in the twentieth century.

The particular time frame of this thesis is based on two considerations. In 1878, the Otago University debating society was established and its first records originate from this year. I decided to terminate my research in 1902 because it marks the end of the Boer War and conveniently includes the death of Queen Victoria and the issue of the Australian Federation of 1901. Both events were crucial for the understanding of New Zealand cultural history and will be dealt with in the thesis. Between 1878 and 1902, debating at the colonial colleges in New Zealand developed from a relatively undefined and unregulated practice into a well-structured and effective feature of higher-education institutions but gradually lost its relevance as a means of public discourse formation. During their formative years, New Zealand societies promoted relatively unregulated deliberation with the purpose of negotiating propositions of vital colonial importance. Debating issues, for example, centred on question about women's participation in the "learned professions" (1879), Darwin's theory of evolution (1878) or the advantages of free trade (1879). By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, late-Victorian students produced discursive rules that were designed to generate objective standards for determining victory in competitions. The pursuit of certainty and formalisation resulted in a neglect of the diversity of debating topics. After 1890, questions of capital punishment and academic dress became commonplaces in the annual programmes. The desire to streamline debate affected the social interaction, audience relation, procedures of argumentation and the compositions of arguments in these societies. The combination of these particular influences led to a significant shift in the way knowledge was generated in colonial New Zealand.

In this thesis, debate is understood as a rhetorical and cultural concept including the practice of debate as well as other forms of discourse. Like American literary and debating societies, New Zealand collegiate debating programmes announced debates as well as essay readings, recitations, Olla Podridas, mock trials, parliamentary debates and musical evenings.<sup>16</sup> The array of rhetorical and, to evoke a 1970s term, “nonverbal” forms of intercourse uncovers a concept of debate that takes into account bodily, and intellectual as well as unobservable features of deliberation.<sup>17</sup> I propose that debate is what Ballantyne and Burton call an “embodied experience” (Ballantyne and Burton 2005a, 409), a cultural phenomenon that in the nineteenth century not only arose from a friction between the ideal and real but also from confrontations of body and intellect.

In order to reveal the interaction of ideal and real instances in nineteenth-century New Zealand debate this thesis demonstrates how Habermas’s theory of argumentation formulated in his *Theory of Communicative Action* can inform an interpretation of debating societies’ records. Habermas utilises a tripartite structure of argumentation to elucidate the social relevance of human communication. He associates rhetoric with the process of argumentation, dialectic with procedures, and logic with the composition of arguments. As such, his model is ideal and normative. Habermas’s theory of argumentation is applicable to the practical context of nineteenth-century New Zealand debate because it provides a terminology that describes students’ idealistic notions of communication. Habermas creates an explicative framework of the ideal that matches and transcends nineteenth-century notions of ideal deliberation. In this thesis,

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<sup>16</sup> The *OED* lists two meanings of Olla Podrida, “dish of Spanish origin” and a “hotchpotch,” a “mixture of languages” only the latter remained in use at the end of the nineteenth century. Since the nineteenth century “ollapodridish” and “ollapodridical” came into use (*OED* s.v. “Olla Podrida”). In the debating context, these evenings were dedicated to readings of literary anonymous literary contributions by members of all genres. At the end of the evening, the audience voted for the best piece and its author was revealed.

<sup>17</sup> Olson reviews the history of the term within the broad discipline of visual rhetoric (Olson 2008, 122). His study is an exciting survey of the changing face of rhetorical study. Beginning with Kenneth Burke’s *A Rhetoric of Motives*, he traces the scholarship on “culturally shaped practices of seeing in their relationship to historically situated processes of rhetorical action” (120). I consider nineteenth-century debate in New Zealand as belonging to this paradigm of rhetorical study.

Habermas's work is not placed in opposition to the supposedly "real" practice of nineteenth-century debate. Instead, his ideal perspective on argumentation complements and informs my research without monopolising its focus on the practice of debate.<sup>18</sup> Zarefsky, in assessing the possibilities of rhetorical analysis, suggests that "it is important to distinguish between models of ideal argumentation (normative) and studies of actual argumentation (descriptive)" (Zarefsky 2006, 401). He maintains that ideal and real cases of either dialectic or rhetoric might not resemble each other and a comparison of them would be a redundant enterprise. While this idea suggests a sympathetic reading of Habermas for this thesis, it also captures nineteenth-century debaters' approach towards debate. They developed an ideal and regulative version as well as a practice that existed in constant friction with the normative standards they recognised. Zarefsky sees one goal of argumentation studies as being "to narrow the gap between the ideal and the real" (415). I suggest that in acknowledging late-Victorian students' inclination to model debate according to ideal standards, the analysis is one step closer to identifying mechanisms that negotiate between the ideal and the real. Habermas's and Zarefsky's position on argumentation make visible ideal and real concepts of communicative practices in nineteenth-century New Zealand debate.

In New Zealand, the tension between the regulative standards of debate and actual practice found its expression in the formalisation of debating procedure and the physical performance of deliberation. The formalisation of debate redefined New Zealand's collegiate societies from "fellowships" of like-minded individuals designed to advance the mental culture of their members into associations aiming to develop the argumentative skills of students on the basis of *esprit de corps*. Both concepts interpreted differently the relation of intellectual force and physical participation. In the

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<sup>18</sup> I am aware that Habermas develops his theory of communicative action in a context of "empirical usefulness". In *TCA*, he dedicates an entire section to the practical application of formal pragmatics (Habermas 1984, 328-37). This particular side of Habermas's research is not the focus of this thesis and has already been dealt with by other authors like James Johnson (1991).

late 1870s and early 1880s, amusing contributions like mock trials or Olla Podridas and rational contemplation in the form of debating evenings were separate items in debating programmes. In creating a sense of belonging among members, they were regarded as complementary items on the agenda. Members were encouraged to show their qualities in different media that utilised their argumentative skill as well as dramatic talent. In the late 1890s, the separation was abandoned in favour of a fusion of these elements into one concept—the debating tournament—that presented debate as a spectacle of logical brilliance. The new concept did not leave room for the performance of poems and piano solos as in the Olla Podridas and annual concerts. Members were meant to display intellectual prowess within the confines of deliberation. The audience was expected to watch. The common ground of debaters shifted towards a regulated intercourse that abandoned ideals of consensus formation in favour of the practicality of argumentation. The quest for victory redefined the practice of debate. As a consequence, the open concept of fellowship gave way to *esprit de corps*, a stricter version of discursive interaction.

The modification of debating goals and forms led to a separation of audience and debaters. Those propounding an argument were put on stage, whereas the remaining members stayed passively in the auditorium. The introduction of external judges who assessed the debating performance reduced the level of physical interaction to a minimum. The audience became an entity that had to be “conducted” rather than engaged with and, in competitions, onlookers were left to take sides at the announcement of the winning team and otherwise refrained from actively engaging in the proceedings. By rendering the audience insignificant in the process of argumentation, debate in New Zealand lost a powerful rhetorical constituent. The social relevance of debating societies was partly generated through the open discussions at the end of each debate. Members acquired authority as debaters because they could engage

in argument either on stage or in the audience. Dunedin, for example, was the location of significant public debates and lectures on questions like Darwinism.<sup>19</sup> These events drew large crowds not only because the topics were of interest but also because people felt confident to attend and join a body of listeners. Moreover, concert, drama productions and Olla Podridas attracted interested outsiders.

Parallel to changes in audience perception, the procedure of argumentation displayed an increasingly strategic interest. Explicit and implicit rules of conduct were considered normatively binding for all members. Because discursive rules in late nineteenth-century New Zealand were entangled in controversies about “culture”, standards of debate were considered universal regulative ideals for the colony. These codes permitted rational, unemotional argumentation. They were drafted in an Arnoldian tradition of cultural conquest and under the influence of Darwinism. Debate became an instrument for establishing appropriate and acceptable forms of discussion within the intellectual elite of the colony.

Eventually, the argument, the irreducible component of debating, came under the influence of scientific methodology. The trend of controlling deliberation resulted in the dominance of principles of induction over the practice of collegiate deliberation. Mainly influenced by professors and public scientific discourse, students adopted the ideal of “reliable truths” in order to justify their regulative framework.<sup>20</sup> The popularity of Evolution as a topic in public lectures was crucial to the integration of the scientific

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<sup>19</sup> Sullivan 2005; Stenhouse 1999.

<sup>20</sup> Hohmann identifies a similar trend much earlier in the legal argumentation of the renaissance (Hohmann 2002). He shows rhetoric and dialectic were neglected in favour of supposedly infallible logical argumentation and scientific methodology. Hohmann’s argument emphasises that legal argumentation was transformed by the belief in scientific certainty; the process was fuelled by a desire to replace the unpredictable confrontation of oppositional standpoints in court by the rational analysis of legal propositions: “[I]n the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the links of legal argumentation with both rhetoric and dialectic are in theory ever more pushed into the background in favour of a focus on hermeneutics that ever renews the ever unfulfilling promise of replacing the clash of opposing legal arguments in a controversial discussion with solitary scientific determination of legal meanings. Somewhat paradoxically, the concern for the political legitimacy of adjudication thus promotes for highly rhetorical reasons a denial of the rhetoricity of legal argumentation, and for the same reasons dialectic is made to deny its dialogical and probabilistic origins in favour of a monological conception of logic emphasizing certainty” (Hohmann 2002, 47-8).

method in students' debates. In New Zealand, discussion of what was scientifically observable and determinable gave rise to discourse on the unobservable, the spiritual and unpredictable. As a consequence, scientific epistemology functioned as the regulative ideal for debating and served to exclude the inexplicable.

The chapters in this thesis follow these central arguments and locate them within scholarship on New Zealand cultural history, American history of rhetoric, argumentation theory and Critical Theory. Chapter one describes the colonial environment in which debate surfaced at the three New Zealand university colleges and traces its development through to the institutionalisation of debate. The rise of these societies was part of a Victorian mutual improvement interest and of the concept of rational recreation. Both phenomena facilitated the formation of diverse colonial societies and helped cultivate different forms of belonging. Chapters two and three discuss two of these fundamental principles that were central for the self-perception of debating societies: fellowship and *esprit de corps*. Both concepts mirror forms of intersubjective behaviour and dynamics of consensus formation that created a common discursive ground among students. Both forms of belonging emerge in the context of invented traditions and rituals. Lakoff in *Talking Power* demonstrates that consensus, as the "closing" of debate, usually entails "openings" of the discussion that resemble certain rituals that structure discourse (Lakoff 1990, 45). Thus the ritualisation of consensus formation and of social relations in debating societies serves as a basis to explore the connection of audience, dialectic and rhetoric. Fellowship and *esprit de corps* echo similar community-forming qualities like consensus-formation or the analytical category of intersubjective behaviour. They are part of the same continuum that describes mechanism which lead to the creation of a discursive community and that are critically explored in these chapters.

Chapter four investigates how specific circumstances changed the perception and function of audience in late-Victorian debate. Based on the discussion of *esprit de corps*, audience became a constituent of debate deprived of decision-making powers. This process shows how the discursive community changed, was reinterpreted by its members and reinvented in its function in the colonial public sphere. Chapter five elaborates on the notion of a passive discursive community and discusses the formalisation of debate in terms of codes of conduct. With an element of increasing competition and laxity in discursive behaviour, students in nineteenth-century New Zealand introduced universal codes of conduct and further restricted debates' potential for a comparatively free means of public discourse. Chapter six concludes the analysis with a discussion of the significance of scientific forms of argumentation for the formalisation process in collegiate debate. Scientific induction exerted a growing influence on the construction of arguments partly because of the popularity of Darwinism among New Zealand's intellectual elite. As one consequence, the community spirit that characterised the early years of debating societies acquired a detached and regulated quality. While the formalisation argument that is developed in these chapters explains a range of discursive phenomena that occurred in and outside collegiate debating societies during the last thirty years of the nineteenth century, it represents one way of understanding them. The conclusion points towards other promising approaches to interpret those discursive activities that shaped not only late-Victorian New Zealand society but significantly contributed to the twentieth-century understanding of public discourse and .



## Chapter One

### The “Noble Mission” of Argumentation in Debate<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

The heyday of debating societies in New Zealand paralleled developments in countries like the United States and Great Britain. In New Zealand, the mostly middle-class intellectual elite introduced familiar British and American forms of communication to the public discourse of the colony. They strove to improve and firmly establish norms of discursive interaction. Very early on, the New Zealand Company was instrumental in sketching a vision for the colony’s future that relied on the expansion of general education through reading. Once in New Zealand, settlers and missionaries set out to adapt to their new circumstances by further enforcing and transcending guidelines imposed on them by the “home country.” Statistical measurements of literacy among New Zealand’s population became the yardstick for scientifically confirming the government’s success in dealing with matters of general education.

The educational realm in New Zealand was divided into an institutionalised sector of schooling and a volunteer-based sphere of further education. The United States and Britain provided points of references for taming an uncivil intellectual environment and for firmly establishing a nation-wide educational framework. Debating in New Zealand arose amidst influences from institutional forms of education like schools and university colleges as well as from volunteer organisations like mutual improvement societies and Mechanics’ Institutes.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a phrase taken from Professor Haslam’s lecture to the Canterbury College Dialectic Society on *Dialectic*: “And this is what we will teach you – the art of persuasion or disputation. To convince yourself of some great truth; to feel, that is, that it is true for you, and to persuade all men that it is true also for them; what nobler mission can you have?” (Haslam 1884, 9f).

Those who engaged in debate in New Zealand regarded it as a perfect communicative tool to reach consensus and discuss matters of general interest in an egalitarian setting. The connection between nineteenth-century debating in New Zealand and Habermas's vision of communication lies in the idealised approach towards argumentation both adopted. In *TCA*, Habermas outlines a theory of communication that focuses on the ability of interlocutors in an ideal speech situation to reach mutual understanding. The notion of rational argumentation is crucial to his idea of controversy and to nineteenth-century understanding of debate. Both rely on the force of the better argument; both approaches are highly systematic, inspired by scientific argumentation and informed by a social element of argumentation.

This chapter provides the theoretical and historical background for the ensuing chapters and highlights the links between education, mutual improvement, debate and an ideal of rational discourse. Initially, by drawing on research on American debating societies as a framework of reference, I identify the social and cultural circumstances that contributed to the emergence of debate in New Zealand. Subsequently, key characteristics of nineteenth-century debating practice are outlined and set in the context of educational circumstances. Finally, Habermas's theory of argumentation and his emphasis on the social relevance of communication reveal the increasing formalisation that corrupted essential elements of social interaction in debate.

### **The Spoken Word, Literacy and Mutual Improvement in New Zealand**

Between 1877 and 1902, New Zealand developed an educational framework that combined two spheres: institutionalised instruction and volunteer adult education. After 1877, schooling bodies were mostly controlled by the government or private investors. Schools, colleges and the University of New Zealand were part of this field of educational policy. The second arena was beyond the control of the government and

flourished on the basis of private initiatives, mostly driven by the Pakeha intellectual elite and established along the lines of British and American models. Mechanics' Institutes and debating and literary societies, for example, were part of both spheres and permeated the entire educational landscape of the colony. Throughout the late-Victorian period in New Zealand, benchmarks for educational achievements included literacy, access to printed information, and an emphasis on elocution as the art of public speaking. The origins of these principles were established in the early years of settlement and effectively remained valid until the end of the nineteenth century.

Between the late 1870s and the turn of the century, New Zealand's intellectual elite found itself dealing with the remnants of the educational ideals of the colonization process of the 1840s. The availability of books and the founding of libraries were part of the process of white settlement in New Zealand from the start. Edward Gibbon Wakefield's idea of "systematic colonisation" and the actions of the directors of the New Zealand Company laid the foundation for a supposedly enlightened settler culture.<sup>2</sup> The accessibility of printed information was instrumental to their programme. The initiators of the New Zealand Company profited from the British experience in the American and Australian colonies.<sup>3</sup> In 1839, Wakefield suggested "the formation of a Public Library, with a General Museum and Scientific Institution, and the establishment of a Dispensary, or Hospital, for the benefit of the settlers, and the Aborigines of the country," observing that "it is obvious that without the former of these institutions, a high standard of civilization cannot be maintained, and that it is beyond the power of the individual settlers to provide for it ..." (qtd. in Traue 1993, 5). He had in mind the

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<sup>2</sup> In 1902, O.T.J. Alpers, a student at Canterbury College, together with his fellow student R. F. Irvine published his unfavourable review of Wakefield's systematic colonisation: Alpers & Irvine 1902, 96-108. For recent scholarship see: Brooking 2004, 43-45; King 2003, 171; Belich 1996, 183 ("Organised Immigration"); Belich moreover connects the idea to the notion of infinite progress and the rise of nationalism: 1996, 292-295; for the origin of *progress* in British society and the Empire see: Marriott 2003, 9-40.

<sup>3</sup> Brooking mentions Pennsylvania in particular (Brooking 2004, 37).

foundation of an alternative and improved model of civilisation that aimed at escaping England's economic and educational struggles. The New Zealand Company diligently promoted literary instruction among its settlers and sent a selection of books along with them. Traue shows that the company "provided for reading classes on the emigrant ships and established libraries for educational and leisure reading during the outward voyage, with the intention that these books should then become part of the stock of the settlements' public libraries" (6). He further demonstrates that even though subsidies for libraries decreased within a few years of their foundation, settlers secured their existence through private investments. Beeby records that, at the end of the century, the American Carnegie Foundation bestowed seventeen library buildings on the New Zealand public; a donation that anticipated the foundation's involvement in New Zealand in the 1930s (Beeby 1988, 39).

By the end of the century, like England and the United States, New Zealand enthusiastically embraced self-improvement culture. As in America, the educated middle class was determined to structure the educational sphere and establish educational traditions that would last into the next millennium. These traditions were based on the belief in the enlightening power of books and reading.<sup>4</sup> In 1902, Robert Stout (1844-1930), in the preface to McMurrin's *From New York to New Zealand* expressed this idealising sentiment in comparing New Zealanders with Americans in their passion for literature:

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<sup>4</sup> Moreover, notions of social power and dominance were linked to the understanding of literacy. Gere in her study of American women clubs between 1880 and 1920 shows that the improvement of literacy among women was central for the club movement. She argues that "literacy enabled women to address the various class, race, and religious constraints in their lives. They thereby enacted cultural work that alternately fostered and modified dominant conceptions of citizenship, capitalism, womanhood, culture, and English studies" (Gere 1997, 251). Because literacy was accepted as a means of discursive participation, in New Zealand, McKenzie explains that colonisers intended to transform Maori oral culture into a literate, that is, written culture. He maintains that missionaries thought to achieve "in a mere twenty-five years: the reduction of speech to alphabetic forms, an ability to read and write them, a readiness to shift from memory to written record, to accept a signature as a sign of full comprehension and legal commitment, to surrender the relativities of time, place and person in an oral culture to the presumed fixities of the written or printed word" (McKenzie 1985, 10).

We speak the same tongue, and we have much in common with them. We read American books, and I do not know if, relatively to our population, the works of their literary men have not been as well perused by us as by the inhabitants of the States. ... Many of us long for more. Will mutual knowledge not create a feeling of respect and brotherhood that will make future misunderstanding amongst English-speaking people impossible? ... If this book can in even the slightest way help to bring about a better understanding between Americans and Englishmen it will not have been written in vain. (McMurrin 1904, vi-vii)

By 1902, Stout employs the rhetoric of the “common language” to promote lasting relationships between the two countries. As a firm believer in educational values, for Stout, the printed word provided New Zealanders with a means to bridge the Pacific and move closer to their American neighbours. Hamer, in his biographical account of Stout for the *DNZB* relates that back in Scotland, he received a considerable part of his education by way of discussions with relatives: “No subject was barred in discussion ... each different family got different newspapers and magazines and these were exchanged ... there was variety in our newspaper literature – Whig, Tory and Radical views were represented.’ Reading occupied the long winter nights, and there were lectures on a diverse range of subjects at the Literary Institute” (Hamer *DNZB*). Shortly after his arrival in Dunedin in 1864, Stout became an active debater and lecturer at the local Lyceum Hall. His debating skills improved to such a level that “he sometimes offended less skilful debaters – in other words, most people with whom he debated – by the scorn with which he treated their faltering efforts” (*ibid.*). In 1875, Stout entered Parliament where his mastery of argumentation served him well. Aside from Stout’s personal views on the subject of “mutual knowledge,” the use of eloquence and the ability to access printed information were regarded as essential for settling differences. Literacy was seen as the one category that statistically incorporated all these desirable elements. Once literate, the individual was able to participate in public discourse. In 1886, Stout, in an address to the Statistical Society, proudly remarked that “our young people are more advanced than their elders in education”, by which he meant their

ability to “both read and write” (Stout 1886, 546). Moreover, Stout listed “those things that tend to increase the happiness of the people – providing for their social enjoyment and intellectual life” (551), among which he counted museums, public libraries, art galleries, athenaeum halls, books, magazines, and newspapers. Above all Stout pointed out that “there are theatres in every town, also concert halls, musical societies, and debating societies, and the New Zealand Institute – an institute founded for scientific purposes – has no less than eight branches. A handsome volume is published every year giving the researches of the members ...” (552). The spirit of the New Zealand Company reverberated in Stout’s perception of New Zealand’s public life and resurfaced in his idea of standards of public education.

In New Zealand the emphasis of late-Victorians on literacy reflected an educational ideal in which progress was measured with mechanical precision. Stout, for example, in his 1886 address, dedicated four pages to the problem of literacy and catalogued census figures according to gender, age and level of education (Stout 1886, 544-548). In New Zealand, the problem of illiteracy was approached as “a technocratic process akin to making a cake” (Soler and Smith 2000, viii). Vital to this process was a strong emphasis on reading in order to improve writing skills. Soler maintains, for example, that in 1899 the syllabus for primary schools in the colony aimed to overcome illiteracy by stressing elocution rather than composition: “Inspectors and teachers judged the ability to read by listening to the quality of the spoken word. Along with reading, composition was to be a vehicle to shape the ‘cultured’ individual who knew the ‘correct and ready use of their mother tongue’” (Soler 2000, 2).<sup>5</sup> With the passing of the 1877 Education Act, literacy increased significantly for the next thirteen years.<sup>6</sup> Brooking’s statement that “this made

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<sup>5</sup> Soler further quotes the *New Zealand Gazette*: “Judging the quality of reading afforded the teacher the ‘surest means of *judging the intelligence of pupils, the degree of culture* which they have attained’” (Soler 2000, 3, italics mine).

<sup>6</sup> Brooking maintains that “literacy rose from an already 70 percent in 1870 to nearly 90 percent by 1890 as a result of the introduction of compulsory schooling in 1877” (Brooking 2004, 72).

New Zealand into one of the most literate societies on Earth” (Brooking 2004, 72) is nevertheless slightly exaggerated. To be sure, for a young colony ten percent illiteracy by 1890 was a great achievement but, in fact, New Zealand paralleled America where rates declined steadily from twenty percent in 1870 to eleven percent in 1900 (National Centre for Education Statistics). Moreover, New Zealand like America experienced a rapid influx of immigrants that required administrative measures to secure a minimal educational standard for the growing and more diverse population.<sup>7</sup>

From the initial settlement of New Zealand onwards, the intellectual elite determined strategies to battle illiteracy that were not palpably egalitarian. Belich points out that, prior to 1900, increases in literacy did not necessarily improve the degree of equality in the colony’s higher education. He argues that “by the 1870s, the gentry had succeeded in establishing a small network of secondary schools for their own children. ... [T]he 1877 Education Act doubled the number by 1885; and it remained roughly constant thereafter to 1900, when they still had fewer than 3,000 pupils” (Belich 2001, 130). In 1900, according to Belich, “fewer than 10 per cent of primary school leavers went on to secondary school, and only 650 free places were provided” (ibid.).<sup>8</sup> Belich’s term “gentry” mirrors McAloon’s position that the colonial middle and upper classes need to be understood in relation to their British bourgeois origin:

The British middle-class ethic was one of individual effort and self-improvement. This ethic characterised both the New Zealand upper class and the New Zealand middle class, with an added dimension whereby investment in colonial economic development entitled the individual to substantial returns. (McAloon 2004, 10)

The Education Act was a piece of New Zealand colonial legislation that, on the one hand, aimed at improving the basic standard of general education, and, on the other,

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<sup>7</sup> For American figures see: online Government Census. Population Table 1790 to 1990. Literacy trends in American and New Zealand education remain closely connected today: Cazden et al. 1992.

<sup>8</sup> Baldwin argues that “[b]y the 1890s, about 70 per cent of primary school leavers left school by the end of standard four and approximately 2 per cent went on to secondary school” (Baldwin 2005, 117). Also: Olssen 1992, 276-7.

established what I call together with Reid and Lochhead the “intellectual elite” of the colony.<sup>9</sup> Members were mostly self-professed “citizens of New Zealand” and belonged to “the self-made middle class” (McAloon 2004, 10).<sup>10</sup> Because they rose to positions of influence in late nineteenth-century and twentieth-century New Zealand, members of the intellectual elite moulded New Zealand’s educational system, its political structure, its art and its cultural representation.

Before members of the elite proceeded to dominate New Zealand’s colonial future, as students they completed their schooling in a gradually maturing educational system that emphasised extensive and varied reading. The availability of printed information and thus extensive reading material, to a large extent, was secured through the circulation of newspapers, journals and magazines. In 1886, Arthur Clayden published *A Popular Handbook to New Zealand* and, in answering the question “What intellectual movement is there?,” he compared New Zealand to England:

For one thing, the newspaper is more universal. In this little city [Nelson] of, say, 7,000 people, there are two daily papers, and every one reads them. ... Every one has an opinion upon every subject. The stolid workman of the old country is here a keen controversialist. ... Colonists read a good deal, and are up to date. The booksellers take care to supply as well as create the want. ... A vast amount of intellectual quickening reaches us from America. The ‘Frisco mail service floods us with Americanism. Our newspapers are full of American

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<sup>9</sup> Reid in reviewing the history of the New Zealand Institute also insists that “a group of socially elite male Europeans asserted that they could define what science was, and that it was economically useful, morally uplifting, and intellectually stimulating” (Reid 2007, 12 and respectively 13-14). He, for example, recalls that some members of the New Zealand Institute, like Edward Tregear and Walter Buller, lied about their professional and educational background in order to adhere to a code of intellectual respectability (14-15; Dunlap 1999, 33). Lochhead likewise uses the term in reference to the demographics of New Zealand’s scientific societies (Lochhead 1994, 14). Baldwin provides a close study of Dunedin’s Otago Boys’ High School. He shows that pupils came from mixed backgrounds and “boys from a wide range of mainly non-manual occupations did attend, indicating that even modest wealth, such as that accumulated by a stationmaster, teacher, small businessman or self-employed tradesman, could buy access to the Boys’ High School” (Baldwin 2005, 127). Baldwin nevertheless concludes that access to tertiary education, in particular to law, medicine and secondary teaching, was limited to those who could afford a secondary school and then matriculate at the university colleges.

<sup>10</sup> Gibbons also regards New Zealand culture as class-divided. (Gibbons 1992, 309) In 1888, Bradshaw described New Zealand as divided country in terms of financial means: “But although, actuated by one motive or another, many people with good incomes, and freed from the anxiety of earning a livelihood, select New Zealand as a place of residence, the great majority of immigrants must for many years to come, if not always, consist either of those who with a moderate amount of capital at their disposal hope to better their position, or of those, who, landing without capital, trust to acquire it in the colony; and for such as these it is most important that the advantages afforded by the colony to *persons of their class* should be clearly states” (Bradshaw 188, 173-174, italics mine).



humour and general news. Few things illustrate this intellectual life more than the avidity with which every first-class lecturer is welcomed. ... No real man ever gets disappointed in his audience. (Clayden 1886, 210-211)

The circulation rate that Clayden mentions corresponded to the average urban rate in America. Smythe shows that, in 1900, approximately 2.61 newspapers circulated in an American urban household (Smythe 2003). Campbell characterises newspapers as “integral, even organic, to American life” (Campbell 2006, 9), a phrase that Alpers and Irvine might have also used in describing the New Zealand newspaper market. In 1902, Alpers and Irvine observed that “in a population of a little over three-quarters of a million there are 208 newspapers on the official register. Many of these are of course mere up-country news-sheets; others are trade or professional journals. But four of them at least will compare favourably, both as to information, tone and style, with the leading papers of the great Australian cities: the Auckland *Herald*, Otago *Daily Times*, Lyttelton *Times* and Christchurch *Press*” (Alpers & Irvine 1902, 387). In 1883, Bradshaw maintained that “the daily press tends to keep up the connexion” with England and “its columns each morning containing telegrams of the leading events of the day before in Europe or America” (Bradshaw 1883, 22). In 1914, Siegfried in *Democracy in New Zealand* maintained that “the newspaper has a very high place in New Zealand. Everybody reads it, and there are few people ignorant or old-fashioned enough not to be interested in the news” (Siegfried 1982, 323). America experienced a similar dedication to the press even though economic conditions were different from New Zealand’s.<sup>11</sup> It

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<sup>11</sup> Trachtenberg maintains that “a great proliferation of newspapers and journals appeared between 1870 and 1890: existing big-city newspapers multiplied circulation several times over; the 1880’s saw the beginnings of such new journals as *Cosmopolitan*, the *Ladies’ Home Journal*, *McClure’s*, and *Munsey’s Magazine*” (Trachtenberg 1982, 122-123). The American infrastructure for the distribution of information was dense in a territory several times bigger than New Zealand’s and bridged the increasing distances in cities as well as the entire country. Mott concludes that the weekly and monthly magazines were the great winners of the growing media market. In 1892, for example, the *Ladies’ Home Journal* reached a circulation rate of 700,000 (Mott 1947, 507). Emery & Emery state that in 1884, under Pulitzer’s “new journalism” regime, within a year, the New York *World* increased its circulation from 15,000 to 60,000 (Emery et al. 1987, 259). Bender illustrates that the New York’s intellectual elite made use of these sudden changes of the American media market (Bender 1987, 156-157). Burns analyses how the media market inspired American “modern artists” to take up new forms of self-performance (Burns 1996, 221-246). Bender’s and Burns’ work make clear that for the American intellectual elite, the notion of public

was not until 1880 that overseas developments were made readily available to the majority of New Zealand papers.<sup>12</sup> As a consequence, newspapers comprised overseas and national political news as well as scientific and literary items complemented by numerous local and national advertisements.

The rise of the intellectual elite and a new emphasis on the cultivation of New Zealand literature were distinctive to the creation of a New Zealand newspaper market. Dawber shows that, from the 1840s, journalism and the creation of colonial literature were combined in a thriving print business. Moreover, “newspapermen had status in the community. Theirs was a serious responsibility and their motives were assumed to be altruistic” (Dawber 2005, 10).<sup>13</sup> McEldowney maintains that the intellectual elite of New Zealand was instrumental in establishing the early *New Zealand Magazine* (published between 1876 and 1877): “The group behind this venture were the first professors at the University of Otago and Canterbury University College, several clergymen, and a business man, Robert Gillies. Contributors included some of the more philosophically inclined politicians. High seriousness prevailed” (McEldowney 1998, 634). Professors at the three colonial colleges helped to establish the main vehicle for scientific thought in the colony: *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute* (first published in 1867). Reid argues that prior to the *Transactions*, “no

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performance and spectacle and educational mission to spread reliable information were ambiguously linked in the Gilded Age newspaper business.

<sup>12</sup> Day illustrates that even though in 1876 New Zealand was connected to Australia by a submarine cable the use of telegraph facilities remained chaotic until four years later (Day 1990, 204-230). Day relates that prior to 1876, “mail ship brought a backlog of news that had accumulated for up to eight days” (205). Only with the establishment of the United Press Association (1879) and the granting of a special wire for the press with the Electric Telegraph bill (1880) was this situation rectified. A comprehensive study of the impact of the telegraph on the management of news in New Zealand is still lacking but American scholarship could provide significant insights. To mention only one example, Blondheim shows how telegraphic communication created “the revolutionary fact that information could be moved without visible signs of movement” and with considerable speed (Blondheim 1994, 189). He demonstrates how this impacted on the American newspaper market and permanently changed the face of American journalism. Chapter six of this thesis explores in more detail the connection of technical innovation, scientific argumentation and the force of the invisible for debate and thus generates some conclusions about the significance of “invisible” communication for late-Victorian New Zealand.

<sup>13</sup> In 1861, for example, Julius Vogel (1835-1899), later Premier of New Zealand (1873-1876) and colonial treasurer under the Stout administration (1884-1887), set up the *Otago Daily Times* (Brooking 2004, 207-208; Dawber 2005, 125-138; Day 1990, 111-115).

previous intellectual New Zealand society had succeeded in publishing an annual volume” (Reid 2007, 37). The *Transactions* were a fusion of scientific, philosophical and political papers, and as such were a compilation that reflected the late-Victorian general understanding of science as natural philosophy.<sup>14</sup> Prior to publication, contributions were read at the regular meetings of affiliated institutes.<sup>15</sup> The *Transactions* were instrumental in dispensing analytical thought and scientific methodology. In 1889, *Zealandia* was the first expression of a rising, distinctively New Zealand literary spirit in print (McEldowney 1998, 637-638). A similar, slightly more serious magazine, the Wellington *Monthly Review*, discussed topics like “Darwinism, biblical criticism, and the Baconian theory of the authorship of Shakespeare’s plays” (638) combined with specifically New Zealand information that ventured beyond the perspectives of Empire and Britain.

The consumption of news made New Zealanders, first and foremost, avid readers but it also turned them into public critics with a “noble” purpose. This idea can only be fully appreciated by being compared to America, where the news market was flooded with “dozens of special-interest publications” (Burns 1996, 6). New Zealand’s print industry did not publish numerous specialised journals; instead, it cultivated a market for general information on politics, science, music, literature, sport and leisure. Cantor et al. illustrate that New Zealand resembled the British Victorian media market. They maintain that before the specialisation of information, “print media not only provided information about science and related areas of cultural debate, but also played a major role in shaping public attitudes towards these historically important subjects” (Cantor et

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<sup>14</sup> I use the term with Dear who explains that “the term ‘natural philosophy’ is perhaps one worth reviving, precisely because it emphasizes that aspect of science which is concerned with explaining and understanding the world – what is often called the ‘scientific worldview’” (Dear 2006, 2).

<sup>15</sup> In 1878, list of affiliated institutes comprised: Auckland Institute, Hawkes Bay Philosophical Institute, Wellington Philosophical Society, Nelson Association, Westland Institute, Canterbury Philosophical Institute and Otago Institute (*TPNZI*, II, 1878, 577). Reid relates the history of the early affiliations of Auckland, Canterbury and Dunedin (Reid 2007, 40-54).

al. 2005, xvii). Moreover, they point out that print information was produced in “a highly diverse continuum of serial formats – including annuals and part-issues – which existed in a state of continual interaction with books and practices of monograph publishing” (xxiv, n3). With the help of their share of global information, the intellectual elite of New Zealand formed universalist opinions on their colonial and imperial contexts and on grand concepts like culture and truth. Mutual improvement and the increased literacy became what Professor Francis W. C. Haslam (1848-1924) in 1884 called the “noble mission” of New Zealand’s intellectual elite.<sup>16</sup> A similar sentiment pervaded American mutual improvement efforts. Gere makes this clear when she begins her study with a 1910 quotation on the significance of women’s clubs: “‘The club movement with its ‘common interests and *noble purposes*’ is accomplishing the work of unifying the women of the country far more quickly than a premeditated movement to that end could do it’” (Mary Woolley, *The Woman’s Club Woman*, qtd. in Gere 1997, 1, italics mine). Common interest and general information were crucial for the establishment of mutual improvement in New Zealand because they allowed the intellectual elite “‘to deny their own existence’” (R. J. Morris qtd. in McAloon 2004, 10) and present their attempts to raise the educational level of the colony as an offspring of aristocratic virtue. In other words, those involved in mutual improvement were entitled to communal recognition either at institutions like colleges and schools or in volunteer organisations like literary and debating clubs.

Interest in universal self-improvement, individual betterment and rational leisure were realised through a number of educational bodies that were beyond the reach of the 1877 Education Act. These groups or small institutions were established on the basis of

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<sup>16</sup> Between 1879 and 1912, Haslam was professor of Classics at Canterbury College. Haslam, originally born in Ceylon, came to New Zealand from England. He obtained his higher education at St. John’s College, Cambridge. Gardner et al. mention that Haslam promoted the Canterbury College Football Club and military training. He also was a prominent member of the New Zealand Institute. The biographical information is based on Gardner et al. 1973, 91 and Scholefield’s *Dictionary* 1940, 366-7.

private interest and volunteer subscription. Mechanics' Institutes, lyceums and mutual improvement societies were at the centre of these educational associations.<sup>17</sup> Literary and debating societies were part of that late-Victorian programme of scholarly progress. In 1904, for example, McMurran concluded that in Auckland "the social clubs compare favourably with those in American cities of treble the population" and "besides these there are working-men's clubs, and the gathering-places of social and political societies" (McMurran 1904, 10). Dakin, who has made a careful study of adult education and mutual improvement in New Zealand, shows that Mechanics' Institutes were part of the foundation agenda of the New Zealand settlement (Dakin 1986, 1987, 1991).<sup>18</sup> In the 1840s, these institutes were meant to encourage collective efforts at increasing knowledge and culture, a maxim that was subsequently adopted by numerous clubs and societies. Stenhouse, with reference to the Nelson Mechanics' Institute, points out that "no discussion of religion or politics would be allowed" (Stenhouse 1985, 29). In other words, a focus of study had to be maintained that avoided contentious cultural issues. Instead, supposedly objective, science-related topics were discussed. Moreover, the institutes, like many mutual improvement societies, established their own libraries and "imported British papers and reviews in order to supplement the extensive libraries

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<sup>17</sup> American associations differed in their class and gender orientation. Ray argues that in the United States, Mechanics' Institutes and YMCAs were more class-specific than lyceums (Ray 2005, 4). Hilkey shows how, in Gilded Age America, the idea of success and social progress was linked to the concept of manhood, in particular in success manuals (Hilkey 1997). These volumes with such elaborate titles like *The Way to Win* or *Pushing to the Front* represented a uniquely American version of mutual improvement that did not permeate the New Zealand book market. Hilkey maintains that "manhood and the character and willpower upon which it was built were not only the means but also the end in the search for success; the achievement of a magnificent manhood was itself success" (151). Kilmer sets this unique American version of success originating from the Gilded Age in relation to the twentieth-century American popular culture (Kilmer 1996, 158-165). Combined with virtues like self-control, the American version of male success reverberates in New Zealander's enthusiasm for Arnold Matthews and his insistence on the regulative force of culture upon the character.

<sup>18</sup> Thompson unravels the story of New Zealand's mechanics' institutes by drawing on their British origins (Thompson 1945, 1-40). Moreover, he illustrates that the industrial revolution in Europe caused a shift towards what he calls a "scientific motive in adult education" (4), in other words, an emphasis on practice and the development of technical skill rather than theoretical instruction.

prosperous colonists brought with them, and to keep up with events ‘at home’” (ibid.).<sup>19</sup>

These publications furthermore provided the information that would sustain the scholarly standard of learning. Mechanics’ Institutes served as a link between the remote “homeland” or “old country” and the thriving educational projects of the New Zealand intellectual elite.

George Hogben, a prominent New Zealand educationalist, pursued the ideals of mutual improvement on an Australasian<sup>20</sup> scale for the benefit of the New Zealand public. In 1881, Hogben came to New Zealand as second headmaster of Christchurch Boy’s High School, after having completed his higher education in England.<sup>21</sup> A declared freethinker, he soon became a member of the Canterbury College Dialectic Society, initiated a debating society for the pupils at the school, and published a school magazine. He utilised available means of public communication to mould the perception of educational values in the colony. To extend his reach, Hogben was an active member of several societies in the colony that were dedicated to communicating rational learning and scientific advance. He became president of the Canterbury College Dialectic Society, the New Zealand Institute and of the New Zealand Educational Institute between 1886 and 1887. In 1892, his efforts finally reached an international stage when he attended the fourth meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science in Hobart. Eventually, the meeting led to the foundation of the Australasian Home-Reading Union, an educational association that encapsulated mutual improvement ideas and was intended to improve access to further education for adults. Adult education in New Zealand gained a degree of professionalism and gradually

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<sup>19</sup> Among the papers that the Nelson mechanics’ institute subscribed to were the *Examiner*, *London Times*, *Quarterly Review*, *Edinburgh Review*, *Westminster Review*, *North British Review*, *Athenaeum*, *Blackwood’s Magazine*, *Punch*, *Chambers Journal* (Stenhouse 1985, 30).

<sup>20</sup> I use the term in Belich’s sense as referring to Australia and New Zealand as one political and economic entity in the Pacific region (Belich 2001, 47). Chapter five of this thesis explores the term in more detail.

<sup>21</sup> The following information is based on Roth’s biography (1952) and Roth DNZB.

became embedded in an international context. Home reading courses, for example, were integral to the American Chautauqua movement – an adult education institution aiming at providing opportunities for self-advancement to mature students. The newly created New Zealand branch of the Australasian Home-Reading Union was also designed to work along the lines of the English National Home-Reading Union. Roth lists the central objectives of these unions:

The Home-Reading Union was open to anybody and, as Hogben was careful to point out, did not intend to enter into competition with schools and universities, or other societies for reading or self-improvement. It was, in fact, an early adult education organization, with aims that to some extent anticipated those of the tutorial classes to be established by the Workers' Educational Association a quarter of a century later. Books were chosen by the council and they were divided into 'required' and 'recommended'. Members could study these by themselves, but if they lived in larger centres, they were encouraged to join a group or circle under a discussion leader. Subscriptions were extremely low, 2s. 6d. a year for single members and 3s. 6d. for members of groups which entitled each to the free receipt of the monthly journal, the *Australasian Home Reader*, which began publication in May 1892. (Roth 1952, 67)

After his return from Hobart, Hogben, in order to promote the idea in New Zealand, developed an extensive correspondence with the New Zealand Mechanics' Institutes that he wanted to serve as the union's teaching locations. The union meant to appeal to middle-class people who were willing to further their education by investing a little money.<sup>22</sup> Eventually, the venture did not succeed due to very low membership rates. In 1897, the union ceased to exist altogether.

The Union's failure can be blamed on the fact that, by the 1890s, the New Zealand adult education market was inundated with self-improvement societies. In the appendix to his study, Thompson lists forty-one mechanics' institutes between 1870 and 1910 (Thompson 1945, 359-360). For the same period, a combination of Dakin's research, Thompson's list and my own research produces a figure of 120 known societies and

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<sup>22</sup> Hogben insisted in this objective in his later career as Secretary of Education in the Seddon Administration (Belich 2001, 130).

institutions dealing with self-improvement.<sup>23</sup> In 1893, the Commemorative Issue of the *Otago University Review* remarked that “everyone who has had experience of debating societies (*and who has not?*) can supply lists for himself beginning with trial by jury and ending with cremation and capital punishment” (*OUR*, Comm. Issue 1893, 42, italics mine).

Fairburn argues that in the late nineteenth-century “literary institutes, mechanics’ institutes, athaeneums – adult education institutions for working men ...” were socially insignificant (Fairburn 1989, 181). He maintains that “by 1900 some 80 remained (10.4 for every 100,000 population); and of these most had been assimilated by municipal libraries or consisted merely of a room in which a handful of members played draughts or chess” (ibid.). Fairburn’s assumptions about mutual improvement societies are possibly founded on high expectations of what these societies could or should have done. Advertisements illustrate that societies held debates, hosted lectures and organised evenings of rational entertainment in the form of drama productions or concerts until 1902. Newspaper research shows that societies were active well into the twentieth century and, until 1900, new ones were regularly founded. In 1881, New Zealand had a European population in urban and rural areas of approximately 485,395. On average 194,158 people were living in boroughs or cities, taking into account that just under sixty percent of this population was living in rural areas.<sup>24</sup> Mutual improvement societies were most active in these places. As a consequence, the average distribution of these groups for 1881 would amount to one per 1,617 borough and town people. Although mutual improvement undeniably declined in the twentieth century,

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<sup>23</sup> I based my research on an online search of the online catalogue of the National Register of Archives and Manuscripts (NRAM) run by Archives New Zealand and the Papers Past platform run by the National Library of New Zealand. The search was based on the following phrase combinations: “literary societies” and “debating societies” in advertisements between 1878 and 1902. See for example: *West Coast Times* (3 May 1883, 4), *New Zealand Tablet* (7 December 1883, 14), *Wanganui Herald* (29 September 1884, 3).

<sup>24</sup> Numbers exclude Maori and are taken from the historical analysis of Statistics New Zealand online. Mein Smith quotes a general non-Maori population of 487,280 in 1881 and 701,101 in 1896 (Mein Smith 2005, 78).



this does not mean that these societies were insignificant for New Zealand's nineteenth-century public discourse.

In New Zealand, societies were mostly active in urban areas like Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin and Wellington and smaller town settlements like Hokitika, Invercargill and Wanganui.<sup>25</sup> Dakin, in his work on the mutual improvement movement in New Zealand and Great Britain maintains that it “was a movement of considerable vitality, although lacking in cohesion, and that it constituted the most significant development in adult education in the period 1870 and 1915” (Dakin 1991, 243). Syllabi combined debates, essay writing and reading, recitals of popular literary works, occasional lectures, and musical evenings. Additionally, most of these societies compiled their own journals. Some societies were specialised like the Wellington Gardeners' Mutual Improvement Society (Dakin 1986, 41). Very often, they established a library for the use of their members. The St. Albans Mutual Improvement Society in Christchurch eventually became a library (ibid.). Many of these groups were initiated by churches but they later became independent of their original affiliation. Some local Y.M.C.A. groups changed their programmes and became more liberal while continuing to use the rooms provided by the churches. For example, the Wesleyan Young Men's Mutual Improvement Society in Wellington made Robert Stout – a declared freethinker – a life-long member (Dakin 1987, 24).

In their original constitutions, at least the three collegiate debating societies, did not explicitly exclude sections of the New Zealand population. Low literacy rates among Maori and the popular sentiment of “the dying race” made it possibly unnecessary to put limitations on membership.<sup>26</sup> It is not so much the idea of racism that is of interest

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<sup>25</sup> This information is based on a newspaper search on Papers Past looking for “literary societies” and “debating societies” in the advertisements between 1878 and 1902. See for example: *West Coast Times* (3 May 1883, 4), *New Zealand Tablet* (7 December 1883, 14), *Wanganui Herald* (29 September 1884, 3).

<sup>26</sup> Belich differentiates between the Black, Grey and White Maori stereotype. For Belich, 1885, marks the heyday of the Grey Maori: “The Grey Maori were a dying race, tragically but inevitably making way for

in this thesis but what made the seemingly contradictory combination of ethnocentric perspective and trends of integration possible in late-Victorian New Zealand public discourse. Without doubt, Sir Apirana Ngata's (1874-1950) academic career was exceptional for his time; active participation by Maori in the New Zealand colleges was highly unusual.<sup>27</sup> In the course of his education he in fact became a prominent member of the debating society at Canterbury College and Auckland University College. The extent of female participation differed from society to society; some societies remained exclusively male. Dakin maintains that "a serious limitation of the mutual improvement societies from the point of view of adult education was that their membership was usually confined to young males" (Dakin 1986, 49). Dakin's statement does not entirely capture the situation. Even though societies like the Christchurch Forensic Club remained entirely male well into the twentieth century, others, like the three student

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the Pakeha by a law of nature. White was the most prominent stereotype to 1860, but war and the continued decline of the Maori population then boosted its rivals, Black and Grey. It was the Grey Maori, the dying race, that held the lead to 1885 and remained important into the twentieth century. But it was increasingly replaced by a resurgence of the White Maori stereotype" (Belich 2001, 207). Stenhouse analyses scientific reasoning, in particular Darwinism, that reinforced the Grey Maori myth in the New Zealand public (Stenhouse 1999, 81-86). Stenhouse further shows how, for example, Alfred Kingcome Newman in the *Transactions* used statistics as scientific evidence to prove that the Maori race "was dying out before Pakeha set foot in New Zealand" (Stenhouse 1996, 125). Chapter six deals with the significance of scientific argumentation in more detail but already at this stage, it is worth noting that Newman blamed "observers not trained in medicine" (qtd. in *ibid.*) for accusing the Europeans of being responsible for the "Extinction of the Maori". In other words, Newman's version of the Grey Maori myth called on the authority of the scientific and professional observer and was the result of the dominant form of public argumentation in New Zealand: inductive reasoning.

<sup>27</sup> Sinclair lists only two Maori students at Auckland University College who also gained a degree: Ngata in 1894 and Henare Poananga in 1905 (Sinclair 1983, 33). Ngata went to Waiomatatini Native School, followed by Te Aute College, where he prepared for university matriculation. The Te Makarini Scholarship enabled him to take up his studies at Canterbury College where in 1893, he completed his B.A. degree. After moving to Auckland, he finished his LL.B. in 1896. At Auckland, he wrote to the Registrar "about the desirability of granting university scholarship to 'Maori half caste youths'. Some students at Te Aute College had passed the matriculation examination but lacked money to attend university" (*ibid.*). At both colleges, Ngata was an active member of the debating societies. In 1892, at Canterbury, he won the prize essay competition with "The Past and Future of the Maori" (MBL, *minute book*, 15 Oct. 1892); a piece that was published the following year. In 1893, he won the Olla Podrida evening with his poem "A War Dance" (*ibid.*, 26 Aug. 1893). Ngata became the first Maori to complete a university degree in New Zealand. After his graduation he challenged the economic and social situation of Maori in New Zealand. Beginning in 1892, he also became associated with the James Carroll, later minister of native affairs. In 1905 Ngata won the Eastern Maori parliamentary seat; a position he held until 1943. Between 1907 and 1908 he also worked with Robert Stout, then chief justice, on the Native Land Commission. Eventually between 1928 and 1934, he served as minister of native affairs himself. Sorrenson attributes to Ngata flawless debating skills: "he could fill the parliamentary galleries whenever he rose to speak" (Sorrenson DNZB). The biographical account is based on Walker's biography of Ngata (2001), Sorrenson DNZB, and Sorrenson 1986, 1:11-38 and Ngata (1893).

debating societies in Christchurch, Dunedin and Auckland, accepted women from the beginning (Forensic Club 1990). Towards the end of the century, societies like the Taranaki Ladies Literary Society, exclusively for women, came into existence (*Taranaki Herald*, 1 Sept. 1890, 2). Membership rules for mutual improvement societies in New Zealand were relatively flexible in comparison to American clubs, where participation was often explicitly restricted and resulted in a high percentage of exclusively female societies.<sup>28</sup>

The late-Victorian educational sphere in New Zealand was mostly shaped by an intellectual elite that followed egalitarian intentions. These were mainly expressed in an attempt to increase literacy rates among colonists. Literacy was regarded as the one objective indicator of educational progress. Gradually, after 1877, public intellectual discourse was shaped by the availability of compulsory schooling and attempts to establish higher education. Moreover, volunteer organisations kept discussions alive and made them public to a membership that could afford to pay the subscription rates. Maori, women and other minorities like the Chinese were not explicitly excluded from participating in these clubs but social disadvantages, in particular for Maori, made their active involvement in the volunteer sphere of education highly unlikely. Debating and literary societies were thriving in these societal structures.

### **Reason and Rational Recreation: Debate and College Life in New Zealand**

Collegiate debating societies in New Zealand were established on the narrow ridge of institutionalised education and public adult education. Up to the 1890s, New Zealand

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<sup>28</sup> In 1901, Texas alone had 132 registered women's study clubs who accepted debating as part of their syllabus (Wiesepape 2004, 7). The Texas Federation of Women's Clubs took charge of registration and Martin maintains that this number represents ten to fifteen percent of the actual number (Martin 1987). Waite in her study of the history of Oberlin College (in 1837, the first American college to educate women alongside men) relates the case of Mary Jane Patterson (1840 - 1894) who overcame two obstacles in pursuing her higher education: race and gender. Patterson became the first black woman to gain an A.B. degree in Oberlin's college course and in 1871 became the first black principal of the Preparatory High School for Coloured Youth in Washington D.C. (Waite 2002, 17). Waite acknowledges that approximately seventy percent of Oberlin's black students went into education to earn a living (ibid.).

collegiate debating societies bridged the gap between mutual improvement and academic training, between university and public. In contrast, American and British clubs were already well established as independent and separate organisations while New Zealand colleges in the 1870s and 1880s were attended by part-time employed adult students who pursued their scholarly studies by going to evening classes. As such, debating societies at New Zealand colleges were an expression of late-Victorian enthusiasm for self-improvement rather than systematic higher education. The intellectual elite of the colony considered them the breeding ground of future political leaders.<sup>29</sup> However, towards the turn of the century they gradually became more formalised, isolated and separated from the urban realities that surrounded their members. They drifted into insignificance and in the twentieth century vanished into the sphere of academic collegiate debating.

Initially, the three New Zealand colleges, Otago, Canterbury and Auckland, incorporated a spirit of self-improvement, social progress and passion for the read and spoken word.<sup>30</sup> In the 1870s, New Zealand was still struggling to establish a coherent higher-education system. Indeed, a considerable controversy about the foundation of a New Zealand university had to be settled before any of the three colleges were officially acknowledged.<sup>31</sup> Otago University (founded 1869), Canterbury College (founded 1873), and Auckland University College (founded 1883) were among the first to affiliate with

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<sup>29</sup> Professor Sale of Otago University, for example, maintained in his opening address to the society: "I have not said a word about the advantages likely to arise from the Debating Society itself, as these are already felt, and there is every hope that we shall soon boast of an arena where the future Goschens and Gladstones of New Zealand may be trained to oratory" (*OW*, 31 May 1879, 15).

<sup>30</sup> Henceforth, the colleges will be referred to by their original names: Otago University, Canterbury College and Auckland University College.

<sup>31</sup> Morrell presents background information on the founding of the University of New Zealand and Otago University (Morrell 1969, 1-36). Gardner et al. and Hight & Candy investigate the development of Canterbury College and its relation to the University of New Zealand (Gardner et al. 1973, 17-40; Hight and Candy 1927, 4-20). Beaglehole provides general information on the proceedings of the University of New Zealand Council and the two University Acts (Beaglehole 1937, 14-108).

the newly established University of New Zealand.<sup>32</sup> The foundation of debating societies immediately after the official establishment of the colleges indicated that discussion and exercise of elocutionary abilities ranked high in the extra-curricular canon. In contrast to the United States, neither rhetoric nor debate was ever taught as a subject in its own right. Otago University contemplated, at one point, the foundation of a chair of rhetoric but abandoned the idea.<sup>33</sup> The practice of rhetoric, in particular debate, took place outside the university curriculum in mutual improvement societies or student associations.

James R. Wilkinson, an early student of the college, in his autobiographical sketch, related that the Dialectic Society at Canterbury College, founded in 1879, was preceded by a “an attempt with general civilian members, young men, to form a debating society, but with good promise of success it early fell through on account of sudden departure of the long-haired Secretary and Treasurer, the funds of the society going with him” (Wilkinson CMDR, 27). The fate of the Dialectic Society was different. Even after 1894, when the Students’ Association was founded, the debating society remained active. Gardner et al. maintain that “the great majority of the active students gave their first loyalty to the clubs and societies” (Gardner et al. 1973, 161). Association with group activities at Canterbury, for example, also resulted in the founding of the exclusively male Phantom Club, “an undergraduate association of studious men friendly

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<sup>32</sup> The University was not a teaching body. It was established in the tradition of the University of London and conferred degrees whereas the teaching was exercised by the affiliated institutions. Galvin summarises the establishment of Otago University (Galvin 2005, 13-27). For Canterbury College, Gardner et al. acknowledge the difficulty in providing just one date because “the establishment of Canterbury College was a protracted and complex episode; its government, staff, classes, site and buildings were assembled piecemeal over a span of five years” (Gardner et al. 1973, 47). The Ordinance of 1873 is commonly identified with the formal founding of the college. Sinclair briefly outlines early developments of Auckland University College (Sinclair 1983, 20-32).

<sup>33</sup> The notion resulted from a controversy in 1878 between the Presbyterian Reverend Copland and the Professor for Mental and Moral Philosophy, Duncan MacGregor on the subject of Social Darwinism (Chapter six). In the course of the controversy, which was mostly conducted in the local papers, Copland took his personal views on MacGregor to the University Council to force a replacement of the professor. Otago University refused Copland’s appeal. The dispute reached a cul-de-sac and in order to resolve the conflict, Dr. Stuart proposed a new chair for English Literature, Rhetoric and Constitutional History. Copland, however, insisted on a chair for Moral Philosophy and Political Economy. As a consequence, Dr. Stuart’s proposal was abandoned (Morrell 1969, 53).

to each other, and membership by invitation” (ibid.).<sup>34</sup> Until 1901, Auckland University College hosted two societies: the debating society as well as the Girls’ Korero Club, the latter exclusively female.<sup>35</sup> By contrast, Dunedin’s student activities were entirely channelled through the debating society.

Teaching staff at the newly founded colleges came from England, Scotland or Ireland. Many of them had been members of student societies during their early careers in Great Britain. They inspired their students in New Zealand to establish similar institutions at the colonial colleges. Charles Chilton, for example, credits Professor John Macmillan Brown of Canterbury College with the suggestion of founding a college debating society (Chilton 1923, 9), which, in 1879, was promptly established by students. James R. Wilkinson maintained that Professor Haslam gave the students the idea for the name “dialectic society” (Wilkinson CMDR, 27). At Auckland University College, in 1887, Classics Professor, Dr. Hutcheson Macaulay Posnett<sup>36</sup> inspired students to establish a society. Until his resignation in 1890, he and the secretary Harold Bagnale shouldered the administrative work for the society. In Dunedin, the reasons for the founding of the club in 1878 remain unclear, although it is possible that the interest in rhetoric and oratory at Scottish universities played a part in the process.

Membership subscription rates at all three societies reflected Hogben’s idea of affordable adult education for his home-reading project. They were comparatively modest. Canterbury College took two shillings and sixpence per year for each member

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<sup>34</sup> Wilkinson further reports that members of the Phantom Club were declared freethinkers, among them some members of the future intellectual elite of the colony: Walter Stringer (Supreme Court Judge), Andrew Davis (orator and actor) and I. R. Thornton (teacher) (Wilkinson CMDR, 28).

<sup>35</sup> The Girls’ Korero Club is mentioned in *NZH*, 14 Oct. 1899, 3 and 30 May 1901, 1-2; *NZIM*, Nov. 1901, 142. The Maori word *korero* means narrative or talk.

<sup>36</sup> During his years in Auckland (1886-1890), he remained president of the society. With his departure, meetings of the society subsided and were re-established with their former frequency in 1891. Prior to his appointment to the chair of Classics at Auckland University College, Posnett published *The Historical Method in Ethics, Jurisprudence, and Political Economy* (1882) and *The Ricardian Theory of Rent* (1884). In 1886, his third book *Comparative Literature* came into print. Posnett was an enthusiastic scholar and with his 1886 work made popular Matthew Arnold’s phrase. His principle entailed that “the influences of social evolution and the environment on the life of man and on his literature” (Sinclair 1983, 35) could be demonstrated by his suggested methodology. The biographical information is taken from Sinclair 1983, 34-36 and SCUA, *minute book*, 1887-1890.

(MBL, Constitution and Standing Order, 1899). The Auckland University College debating society kept its subscription rate even lower at one shilling (SCUA, *minute book*, 1903, 161). Even for students who were part-time employees and who attended lectures in the evening, participation was possible from a financial point of view.<sup>37</sup> Between 1878 and 1902, attendance figures, where available, varied (Appendix 1). Societies in Christchurch and Dunedin reached a peak in membership during the early 1890s when the Auckland society temporarily ceased to exist. Appeals to students to join the societies were published in the *Reviews* of the colleges and praised the improvement of “mental culture” and the “promotion of the fellowship of students” (CCR, June 1902, 21). In general, debating societies were welcomed by the administration of the colleges because they addressed a need to cultivate the spoken word beyond the classroom and this inevitably meant the acceptance of outsiders into the clubs.

In their formative years, the colleges accepted matriculated and non-matriculated students and, as a consequence, resembled adult education institutes rather than universities. The situation of students at the colonial colleges was by no means ideal. Sinclair shows that, in Auckland, most of them earned their living during the day and furthered their education in the evening:

Right from the start most of the students were part-time, working as teachers or in commerce during the day. Consequently most of the lectures were delivered in the evening. In the second term of 1883 there were only four classes before 1 p.m., two in law and two in English. The rest were after 6 p.m. ... The students were far from being ‘stirrers’. (Sinclair 1983, 33)

The same situation applied to Otago and Canterbury. Oscar T.J. Alpers, studying at Canterbury, recalls that “[i]n vacation I got jobs as ‘relieving teacher’ in Board schools. In term-time I made carbon copies of my notes of lectures and sold these to extra-

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<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, it remains a fact that students were usually in a financial straightjacket. Gardner et al. show that on average, a student at Canterbury College needed at least £50 per session to live comfortably. As a consequence, exhibitions at Canterbury at £20 per annum were fiercely contested. (Gardner et al. 1973, 140)

murals in the country whom I ‘coached’ by correspondence. When I had established myself somewhat by successes in the College examination, I started night-classes in Latin” (Alpers 1928, 53). Some lecturer, like John Macmillan Brown, held classes in the morning at 7.45 a.m. “so that most of his Christchurch students might begin their own day’s teaching at nine” (Gardner et al. 1973, 141).<sup>38</sup> Student numbers were equally low and only a few were matriculated. In 1878, colleges in Dunedin and Christchurch had, in total, 168 students (Beaglehole 1937, 126). Students at Canterbury nevertheless initially intended to organise the Dialectic Society as matriculated students only.<sup>39</sup> In 1882, members of the society in Dunedin resolved that they would accept “students and ex-students of the University of Otago” without election (Hocken, *minute book*, 23 June 1882). Auckland University College survived because “its regulation specified that lectures were not restricted to matriculated students of the University of New Zealand, but that anyone paying the fees could attend” (Sinclair 1983, 26). As a consequence, in 1883, ninety-five students attended lectures in Auckland most of them without being matriculated.<sup>40</sup> Due to its financial situation, Auckland University College constantly struggled for a good reputation. In 1901, the *New Zealand Illustrated Magazine*

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<sup>38</sup> At Canterbury, the advisability of evening lectures was discussed and “it was decided that, whilst the circumstances of colonial life demanded evening classes, the lectures should be kept as nearly as possible within the hours of daylight in the interests of women and country students” (Gardner et al. 1973, 34).

<sup>39</sup> Chilton recalls the founding of the society and maintains that “at that time the matriculated students were few in numbers, but they formed a compact body, most of them had already formed close friendships with one another at school, they were young and enthusiastic, new students in a new College and they felt rightly enough that they were the students for whom the College was really founded; on the other hand the non-matriculated attenders at lectures, though more numerous, had no such close bond of sympathy, many of them were much older, they were drawn to the College to this or that special lecture for some particular end, and apart from that had no close interest in the work of the College or its future” (Chilton 1923, 10). The debate about restrictions of membership was decided in favour of matriculated students.

<sup>40</sup> In 1884, the number rose by eighty followed by a decline in numbers. In 1901, for example, numbers also only reached 156 (Sinclair 1983, 32-33). For 1899, the *NZIM* states that 239 students attended lectures (*NZIM*, Nov. 1901, 141). Sinclair argues that the university college could not have existed had it accepted only matriculated students: “In 1881 Auckland’s population was 30,952, while the township of Onehunga and some villages lay a few miles to the south. Dunedin was still larger than Auckland, with 42,795 people. Both Otago and Canterbury had larger European populations than Auckland Province, which had a European population of 100,000 plus a majority of the country’s 44,000 Maori. In Auckland there were 20,669 children at school. In the secondary schools there were only 550 students, had the College enrolled only matriculated students it could scarcely have survived. Its regulation specified that lectures were not restricted to matriculated students of the University of New Zealand, but that anyone paying the fees could attend” (Sinclair 1983, 26).



published a review of the colleges and Auckland scored very low. Its buildings were compared to “barracks” and a “boot factory” and the college could only preserve its dignity by being associated with the first New Zealand parliamentary government and a well equipped science laboratory (*NZIM*, Nov. 1901, 134-135).<sup>41</sup>

Even though circumstances were difficult for students at the three colleges, debating, literature and the newspaper business brought them together. In 1883, the idea of a national New Zealand literary magazine surfaced in the debating societies at Canterbury College and Otago University. Initially, the secretary of the Dialectic Society was instructed “to communicate with the Otago University and the University College of Auckland with reference to the establishment of a New Zealand Literary Magazine” (MBL, *minute book*, 5 May 1883). Only Otago replied to the letter; it approved “the suggestion made by the Canterbury College Dialectic Society and pronounce[d] to give its heartiest support to the project of issuing, on the proposed lines, a Literary Magazine in New Zealand” (Hocken, *minute book*, 8 June 1883).<sup>42</sup> Subsequently, both societies founded committees to determine whether the “leading men of New Zealand” would support the endeavour as “subscribers and contributors” (Hocken, *minute book*, 20 July 1883).<sup>43</sup> Eventually, in 1884, the committee in Christchurch presented its report. After “a large amount of correspondence has passed between your Committee and the Magazine Committee of the University of Otago Debating Society,” it was decided “that in the opinion of this meeting of the combined committees ... it would not be desirable to start a Magazine at present. Nevertheless they believe that a field undoubtedly exists for such a periodical and they recommend that members of the societies should devote themselves to such literary work that should

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<sup>41</sup> For the review of Otago University: *NZIM*, Sep. 1901, 900-906; for Canterbury College: *NZIM*, Oct. 1901, 49-54; Auckland University College: *NZIM*, Nov. 1901, 134-143; Victoria University College: *NZIM*, Dec. 1901, 224-232.

<sup>42</sup> Students in Auckland were yet lacking formal representation and did not reply to the inquiry.

<sup>43</sup> This resolution was the result of a meeting held in January 1884 at Dunedin among the members of both committees. Unfortunately the archival information does not reveal the list of those prominent men.

lead to the successful starting of a Magazine in two or three years” (MBL, *minute book*, 19 April 1884). The students never launched their own literary magazine but in the 1890s began to publish collegiate *Reviews* at Otago and Canterbury. The debating society in Auckland, under Professor Posnett’s leadership, addressed the same problem in different terms with a clear focus on elocution. Until his resignation in 1890, the secretary of the Auckland society read once a year the contributions by members to the “Magazine” or “Journal”.<sup>44</sup> The “Magazine” was a special evening, rather than a printed periodical, devoted to an exercise of literary criticism that was meant to cultivate students’ taste and expertise in handling literary texts. The Auckland society also encouraged oratorical training like no other of its sister organisations and from its establishment, the society annually awarded a medal for best orator.

Despite the discouraging letters concerning students’ literary ambitions, debating societies avidly utilised the press to promote their debates in and collect relevant information from papers like the *Otago Witness*, *Evening Star*, *Lyttelton Times* and the *Herald*. Even comments like Professor Brown’s that “it does not need much proof in this age of newspapers and fatal fluency to show that writing is often done without the aid of thinking” (Brown 1881, 9-10) did not stop students from consulting papers for valid information. In 1889, members at Canterbury contemplated the establishment of a magazine club in order to secure the availability of pertinent publications. In 1897, the CCR reminded students “of the valuable amount of direct information supplied by these magazines on subjects of debate at the meetings of the Dialectic Society” and recommended the *Review of Reviews*, *Contemporary Review*, *Eclectic*, *Nineteenth Century*, *Fortnightly*, *Century Illustrated*, *Spectator*, *Field*, *Magazine of Art*, *Musical Times*, *Quarterly* (CCR, Oct. 1897, 39). Advertisements published in New Zealand dailies afforded the societies with an opportunity to reach an audience beyond the

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<sup>44</sup> These evenings took place, for example, in 1889 and 1890 (SCUA, *minute book*, 24 June 1889 and 23 May 1890).

college. Part of their syllabi drew large crowds and opened their discursive sphere to strangers.

One element of their programme that surfaced in the late 1890s was the debating tournament which was particularly well suited to attract crowds of outsiders. Tournaments combined competition with elements of spectacle and information display, especially through jettisoning the monologue pattern of lectures and giving the platform to two or more speakers. The audience, initially, served as a judge of performance and rational argumentation. Moreover, most competitions addressed topics of actual relevance. The Auckland debating society was involved in one of the first tournament competitions held in New Zealand. In 1900, the Auckland Athenaeum met with the collegiate debating society on the issue “that it is the duty of a state to provide pension for its aged citizens” (SCUA, *minute book*, 24 Aug. 1900). Rose Ilbert, a student at the college, attended the evening (accompanied by her aunt) because her tutor for Mathematics, Mr. Watts, was a participant. To Rose Ilbert, Mr. Watts appeared to be “much agitated over this evening’s debate” (Ilbert SCUA, 27 Aug. 1900). Watts was one of a team of seven. At the evening’s end Rose concluded that “our men were decidedly the most pleasing speakers. The other ranted but they won” (ibid.). Debate, in this instance, became a respectable show that even a young woman accompanied by her aunt could attend. Elements of mutual improvement and rationality guaranteed that debating competitions would remain within the confines of late-Victorian cultural norms.

Tournaments were not the only “crowd pleasers”. Debating societies created and maintained other popular forms of rational discourse that legitimately entered the public realm. They hosted musical evenings, popular lectures and cultivated Olla Podridas and

Farragos.<sup>45</sup> In 1893, the *OUR* remarked that “the range of subjects dealt with by the Society is a wide one, but, save insofar as a distinct academical section is added, does not differ widely from that of the commoner variety of debating societies” (*OUR*, Comm. Issue 1893, 41). Topics ranged from “one man, one vote” (Appendix 3) and the discussions of the moral effects of theatre (Appendix 4) to the advantages of academic dress (Appendix 5) and the question of women in the medical profession (Appendix 6). The first debate in Dunedin dealt with Darwin’s *Origin of Life* (Hocken, *minute book*, 30 August 1878). The issue of “Free Trade and Protection” was the first topic for debate at the Dialectic Society in Christchurch (MBL, *minute book*, 5 April 1879). In 1887, Auckland students held their first debate on the proposition that “the payment of members of the House of Representatives is for the best interests of New Zealand” (SCUA, *minute book*, 29 July 1887).

The variety of discursive forms and the array of topics contributed to what Ray in the American context calls the “culture-making rhetorical practice” (Ray 2005, 6) of discourse. Ray investigates the activities of numerous lyceums across the United States and focuses on the circumstances that allowed for knowledge formation and public representation. Ray sees the American lyceum as a “quasi-civic arena ... in which members of the polity performed a ritual of democratic participation through an enactment of public conflict” (Ray 2003, 274), a description that is valid also for New Zealand societies. She shows that beyond the level of topic analysis, debating societies in ante-bellum America were social gathering places where “individual and collective performance” (Ray 2004, 6) shaped rational deliberation. In New Zealand, likewise, these elements met in the debating arena. Reid, for example, characterises meetings of the New Zealand Institute as continually striking a “balance between exclusivity and

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<sup>45</sup> “Farrago” originally had two connotations: hotchpotch of material things and persons, a medley of immaterial things. The nineteenth century only knew the last usage (*OED* s.v. “Farrago”). In the debating context, these evenings were dedicated to readings of anonymous literary contributions by members of all genres. At the end of the evening, the audience voted for the best piece and its author was revealed.

popularity” (Reid 2007, 144). In these volunteer societies, ideals of democratic participation met with forms of rational entertainment. Membership regulations occasionally attempted to exclude non-matriculated students, whereas societies tried to keep fees low to attract the majority of undergraduates. Moreover, formalised scientific argumentation was juxtaposed with ideas of public spectacle. In the 1870s and 1880s, clubs in New Zealand fused institutionalised forms of social interaction with popular components of New Zealand society. During the 1890s, literary and debating societies were themselves institutionalised, for example, in organising bodies like the Literary Societies Union (SCUA, *minute book*, 18 Aug. 1892) or, later in the twentieth century, in the New Zealand University Debating Council.<sup>46</sup> By 1902, collegiate debating societies developed into quasi-civic arenas that institutionalised and regulated argumentative conflict. By the end of the nineteenth century, dissent in actual debating practice became only a vague allusion to values of mutual improvement and was submerged in a discourse of efficient and successful argumentation. Between 1870 and 1902, debating societies in New Zealand oscillated between a tendency to formalise and institutionalise their organisation and a sentiment of civic tradition and relatively free, volunteer debating practice.

### **Dynamics of Formalisation: Habermas and the Nineteenth Century**

From a nineteenth-century perspective debate was part of the mutual improvement agenda insofar as it put forth pro and con opinions on socially relevant topics and promoted an accepted norm of public discourse. Moreover, debate publicly negotiated these standpoints and as a consequence, embedded issues like Darwinism, the franchise or proceedings of the House of Parliament in a community-like setting. Habermas’s work helps to identify the ideological foundation of nineteenth-century forms of social

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<sup>46</sup> The Council is mentioned in *New Zealand University Student Press Council News Bulletin*, 12 July 1961, volume IV, no. 3, first issue, as the body who was responsible for selecting the members for the Melbourne Debating Tournament in 1961 (Hocken Student Association Papers).

organisation and processes of formalisation in debate. Eley, for example, shows that Habermas can be applied to an American nineteenth-century context in order to understand American citizens' "universe of voluntary association" (Eley 1992, 292). Olssen observes that the public forum in New Zealand, as in America, was permeated by "spirit of organization" (Olssen 1992a, 262).<sup>47</sup> Habermas explains this tendency of social association with the individual's continual shifting between a *lifeworld* of real personalised ties and an imposed system that continually threatens to undermine the *lifeworld* with attempts at formalisation. Communication is the medium that connects these two spheres of social existence. In *Theory of Communicative Action*, communication and argumentation combine rhetorical, dialectical and logical elements to account for the complex nature of discursive interaction. This Habermasian framework facilitates a systematic reading of nineteenth-century debating practice because it suggests that formalisation acts upon either one of these three elements.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Olssen observes that this trend "pervaded all spheres of New Zealand life: public and private, business and leisure, family and club. To some extent the process fed on itself. 'Organisation can be met only by organisation', as William Scott, one of the architects of the New Zealand Employers' Federation remarked" (Olssen 1992a, 262). While Olssen applies this idea mainly to the changing patterns of family life, education, religion and work in the colony in this specific essay, his work influenced historical research in New Zealand beyond these issues (Olssen 1992b, Olssen, Moloughney and Ballantyne 2006).  
<sup>48</sup> In the first volume of *TCA*, he differentiates three interrelated perspectives of argumentation: rhetoric, dialectic and logic. Habermas illustrates that each discipline reveals a different aspect of argumentation. Rhetoric shows "the structures of an ideal speech situation immunized against repression and inequality in a special way" (Habermas 1984, 26). Dialectic is concerned with "the structures of a ritualized competition for the better arguments" (ibid.). Logic "determine[s] the construction of individual arguments and their interrelations" (ibid.). Habermas's systematic understanding of argumentation relates to Aristotle's distinction of demonstrative, dialectical and rhetorical arguments (Eemeren et al. 1996, 33; Habermas 1984, 26; Appendix 2). Habermas maintains that the three dimensions of argumentation are interrelated and that "at no single one of these analytical levels can the very idea intrinsic to argumentative speech be adequately developed" (Habermas 1984, 26). The discussion of a tripartite perspective on argumentation permeated argumentation theory of the 1970s and 1980s. At the Summer Conference on Argumentation in 1979, Zarefsky criticises O'Keefe's opinion that argument could be product and process (Zarefsky 1980, 228) and Wenzel's paper on argumentation as procedure (Zarefsky 1980, 229; Wenzel 1980). A year earlier, Wenzel published a discussion of Habermas's perspective on argumentation as procedure in the American *Forensic* (Wenzel 1979). Zarefsky maintained that the normative reading of argument (as something natural in the world) should be abandoned in favour of viewing argument as "point of view": "According to this approach, our object of study would not be some part of the natural world but all communication behaviour. The concept of argument would be hermeneutic; that is, it would be a way to interpret communication" (Zarefsky 1980, 234). This critical reading of Habermas's argumentation approach remains valid today. Even though, Habermas's in *TCA* modifies his perspective and argumentation always combines rhetoric, dialectic and logic, he is not able to satisfyingly demonstrate that argumentation is naturally equipped to carry binding normative implications for a community.

Moreover, Habermas's concept that communication is always intersubjective and aimed at consensus formation makes visible aspects of debate that were transformed by an increasingly competitive practice at the end of the nineteenth century. Additionally, the Habermasian background is enlarged by the multi-dimensional research in the field of argumentation theory and the history of rhetoric.<sup>49</sup>

In Western European culture, the tendency to investigate forms of argumentation originates in the nineteenth century. Van Eemeren et al. point out that instruction in debate coincided with a new interest in the "relationship between the *species* of debate and the *genus* argumentation" (Eemeren 1996, 193).<sup>50</sup> Twentieth-century critical perspective regards debate mostly as process, that is, as a rhetorical exercise that trains forms of democratic participation.<sup>51</sup> In New Zealand, the combination of species of debate and argumentation resulted in an understanding of debating as a useful skill in educative communication.

Three components of rhetorical theory were central to New Zealand debating: audience, procedure or conduct, and the argument itself. Between 1878 and 1902, debating societies formalised the relationship between speaker and audience; they prescribed a certain mode of conduct in debate; and finally they proscribed the form of argument accepted in debate in order to "promote the fellowship and mental culture of the students" (MBL, Constitution, 1879). Scobie Mackenzie (1845-1901), one of the

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<sup>49</sup> The first International Conference on Argumentation in 1986 initiated an interdisciplinary critical approach towards understanding popular argumentation (van Eemeren et al. 1987). The organisers van Eemeren, Grootendorst, Blair and Willard, in an attempt to accommodate as many disciplinary strands of argumentation studies as possible, differentiate between rhetorical, epistemological, cognitive and empirical, pragmatic, formal, and conversational perspectives. The field of argumentation theory has been confirmed since then. Studies like Zarefsky's in the history of rhetoric expand the original vision and apply pattern of argumentation to historical contexts (Zarefsky 1990).

<sup>50</sup> The debate about the vices and virtues of intercollegiate debates in America illustrate this point. Kaiser shows, for example, how George Pierce Baker and Ralph Curtis Ringwalt contemplated the form of these competitions on grounds of their argumentative force and civic value (Kaiser forthcoming). Moreover, at the beginning of the twentieth century, American and British scholars like Baird and Nichols compared British and American argumentative forms of debate in order to determine which was more suitable to make students responsible citizens (Baird 1923, Nichols 1936).

<sup>51</sup> Ehninger emphasises that "debate as a process theoretically is interminable" (Ehninger 1966, 181; Ehninger and Brockriede 1963).

most avid public speakers in New Zealand, identified audience relation as the element that rendered debate socially and rhetorically effective.<sup>52</sup> In 1895, he spoke to the members of the debating society at Otago University and insisted that immediately adapting to a rhetorical situation and relating to the audience were crucial to seriously engaging in public debate.<sup>53</sup> Mackenzie concluded that “after all it is sincerity in the speaker that enables him to exercise most influence with his hearers” (Mackenzie 1895, 133). If it was sincerity that mattered to the audience, the regulative norm for discourse was truth. In 1884, Professor Haslam of Canterbury College lectured to the members of the debating society on dialectic. In combining Platonic idealism, Socratic argumentation and Arnoldian sentiment, Haslam equated dialectic with a procedure by which debaters “search after truth” (Haslam 1884, 32). Haslam maintained “that the search after truth, whether absolute or relative, is mainly valuable as a means whereby we may establish for ourselves and others, a rule of conduct” (ibid.). In other words, in a combined reading of Haslam and Mackenzie, the debater profited from the situation

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<sup>52</sup> Mackay John Scobie Mackenzie originally came to Australia from Scotland where he became an expert stockman. In 1870 he was offered the post of managing a big station in Otago. Five years later he bought his own station, Kyeburn, and prospered. Now being part of Otago’s wealthier elite, he began to be active in politics. He openly heralded Thomas Carlyle, Disraeli’s imperialism and was a self-proclaimed classical liberalist and supporter of free trade and individualism. Brooking remarks that “he developed his already impressive debating skills and became an effective and acerbic critic of Stout, whom he described as ‘a wriggling worm’” (Brooking DNZB). He gained a reputation of being the best speaker in Parliament but neglected his station. Financial difficulties caused him to resign from the elitist Dunedin Club. In 1896, with the help of the press, he returned to parliament for the City of Dunedin. In 1899, he retired due to ill health and his defeat in the election. In the two remaining years of his life, he was an enthusiastic supporter of the South African War and spent much time raising funds. The biographical information is based on Brooking in DNZB.

<sup>53</sup> In his lecture, Mackenzie described the difference between debate and a set speech: “The real difference lies in the fact that the set speech-maker has the command of the arrangement of his subjects, and the order in which he shall bring them on. The debater is equally prepared on the general question, but the arrangement of the points of his speech depends upon the judgement he must exercise at the moment he gets up” (Mackenzie 1895, 132). Furthermore, debate entailed conflict and Mackenzie maintained that “conflict begets heat, and heat vehemence; and vehemence properly controlled appears to be of the very essence of the quality of oratory which attracts an audience” (133). Debate, from Mackenzie’s point of view, seemed to respond to the discursive potential of a situation or to what Bitzer later termed the rhetorical situation. Bitzer believes that all rhetorical discourse emerges as a response to a rhetorical situation. An audience, constraints, and an exigence are defining conditions for a rhetorical situation (Bitzer 1968; 1980, 26-30). Exigence is described as “an imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be” (Bitzer 1968, 6). In other words, it is the problem that is identified as ripe for discursive deliberation by members of a community. For Mackenzie, debaters reacted to “imperfections” in the argument of the other and had to address issues that were socially relevant to those who watched them.



that audience and social circumstances produced. S/he appeared on stage to propound her argument and to return a set of rules to the hearers that was normatively binding. Professor Frederick W. Hutton (1836-1905) at Canterbury, together with his colleagues Thomas J. Parker (1850-1897) at Otago and George M. Thomson (1848-1933) in Auckland, discussed the most reliable means for creating a valid and truthful discourse. In 1888, Hutton asked debaters at Canterbury “what then is the process of verification? What are the tests of truth?” (Hutton 1882, 7). In 1881, his friend and colleague Professor Parker showed members of the Otago University debating society that “the methods by which we arrive at all conclusions are by induction and verification” (*OW*, 4 June 1888, 22). This answer remained valid in New Zealand until the end of the century.

Habermas, like late-Victorian debaters, considers discourse as potentially ideal, oral, truth-oriented and rational.<sup>54</sup> From Habermas’s point of view, the combined understanding of audience-relation, procedural pattern and logical construction creates a paradigm that acknowledges the scope of argumentative discourse in real social and cultural settings. Cronje shows that Habermas’s notion of argumentation as a “synthesis of rhetoric with dialectic, and logic in argumentation has a *rationalising* function” in scientific discourse because participants agree to “‘play the game’ of communicative rationality” (Cronje 2002, 272). Like Cronje in her study, Habermas seeks a regulative principle beyond the mere analytical level of discourse that addresses the unpredictability of what he terms “distorted communication.”<sup>55</sup> In other words,

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<sup>54</sup> In his lecture, Haslam in discussing Socrates praised the advantages of human speech: “But man possessed the divine gift of articulate speech. Were not these very objects of his search – the good – were not these themselves words, and were not words the expression of things. When men spoke of the good and necessary and the beautiful, surely they meant something; and surely it was possible to discover by patient question and answer, what was the thing which was meant by each of these words” (Haslam 1884, 21).

<sup>55</sup> Edgar explains that distorted communication in Habermas’s theory represents the substitution of external with internal organisation of speech: “Put simply, an inability to deal with conflict (akin to the neurotic’s inability to deal with the original trauma) manifests itself in a disruption of communicative competence (and, specifically, an inhibition on raising the very validity claims that might make public

Habermas wants to address the modern corruption of meaning in discourse by validating his theoretical assumptions in the practical reality of communication. On the one hand, he takes as his point of departure the supposition that argumentation functions on the basis of naturally formalised patterns of language. On the other, he acknowledges that communication is embedded in contexts of social interaction that obscure the regulative power of speech.

Habermas's *TCA* combines two premises that encompass the social role of argumentation. He maintains that communication is always intersubjective and that it aims, because of its rational nature, at consensus formation. In his earlier essay, "What is Universal Pragmatics?," Habermas regards consensus and intersubjectivity as vehicles for mutual understanding: "The aim of reaching understanding (*Verständigung*) is to bring about an agreement (*Einverständnis*) that terminates in the intersubjective mutuality of reciprocal comprehension, shared knowledge, mutual trust, and accord with one another" (Habermas 1998, 23). Habermas, in *TCA*, further propounds the argument that undistorted human communication is made possible through features of speech that are necessarily rational. The nineteenth-century defence of induction as the prime scientific form of investigation carried similar connotations. Induction was regarded as the most reliable and most "natural" form of scientific proof. For Habermas, communicative action is the realisation of the rational potential of language. He argues that "conflict, competition, strategic action in general – are derivatives of action oriented toward reaching understanding" (21). In a debate, for example, two contesting parties bring forth their arguments. They refrain from non-verbal and bodily actions and comply with a protocol that favours logical argumentation.<sup>56</sup> In the end, ideally, the

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that conflict)" (Edgar 2005, 156). In other words, Habermas maintains that disruptive systemic social forces corrupt the natural ability to communicate on equal terms.

<sup>56</sup> Habermas explicitly excludes "nonverbal actions and bodily expressions" in his considerations (Habermas 1998, 21). Likewise, nineteenth-century debaters considered the problem of "how far personalities are allowable" (Mackenzie 1895, 138). Towards the end of the century, reference to physical

contestants and the audience have to yield to the force of the better argument, that is, to the argument that is logically sound, intelligible, true and morally right. Habermas acknowledges that the ideal case does not always apply to social realities. As a consequence, people sometimes have “to draw upon the means of strategic action, with an orientation toward coming to a mutual understanding, so as to bring about a common definition of the situation” (Habermas 1987, 121). They have to recur to “repair work” (ibid.) in order to bring the discussion back to its rational core.<sup>57</sup>

For Habermas, a debate like that on Darwin’s work held in Dunedin in 1878, arises from discursive circumstances in the *lifeworld*. Habermas demonstrates that the *lifeworld* consists in “stored-up cultural contexts, the patterns of interpretation, valuation, and expression” (Habermas 1987, 125). He allows for shifting interpretative horizons in the *lifeworld* but argues that when participants “go beyond the horizon of a given situation, they cannot step into the void; they find themselves right away in another, now actualized, yet *preinterpreted* domain of what is culturally taken for granted. In everyday communicative practice there are no completely unfamiliar situations” (ibid.). For Habermas, the *lifeworld* needs to be understood from the perspective of culture, society and the individual person. Moreover, norms of cultural

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expressions was made but restricted to the mentioning of “tumultuous applause and excitement! The Canterbury College Maori war-cry!” (*CCR*, June 1903, 13). Moreover, “a grinning audience” (*OUR*, June 1897, 48) and participants who “loll up against the wall” (*CCR*, Oct. 1897, 35) were also mentioned. These references were always critically tested against the standard of “gentlemanly” behaviour in debate and usually dismissed as unacceptable (*OUR*, June 1895, 56). In 1936, Nichols reviewed the “progress” of formalisation of American debating and dismissed British styles for their lax regulations and lack of discipline. He maintained that “debate as it existed in the literary societies of the colleges and in the lyceums and cross-road villages during the eighties and nineties ... was not an activity we call debate in college ... to-day. It was a desultory discussion in which opinion rather than evidence rules, hasty inference rather than research was prominent ... Humor and satire, indulgence in personalities, rash generalization, *ad hominem* appeal, and many of the things that still obtain in British debating were prevalent” (Nichols 1936, 215). Nichols’s perspective incorporates a defence of formalisation and regulation that at the end of the nineteenth century, was maturing and gradually claiming the debating space.

<sup>57</sup> For Habermas, this rational core is existent even in a shifting real social context. He shows that communication is always enmeshed in “relevance structures;” a phrase that captures the interpretative horizon of utterances: “Relevance structures can be conceived instead as interconnections of meaning holding between a given communicative utterance, the immediate context, and its connotative horizon of meaning. Contexts of relevance are based on *grammatically regulated* relations among the elements of a *linguistically organized* stock of knowledge” (Habermas 1987, 124).

reproduction, social integration and socialisation interact and act upon the individual as well as the cultural and societal settings of a given reality (144). This makes his concept of a shared discursive situation flexible despite his insistence on a rational normative foundation of human language. If the social embeddedness of the individual in the *lifeworld* is complete, “the process of reproduction [of meaning] connects up new situations with the existing conditions of the *lifeworld*; it does this in the *semantic* dimension of meanings or contents (of the cultural tradition), as well as in the dimensions of *social space* (of socially integrated groups) and *historical time* (of successive generations)” (137-138).

Within the interaction of semantic dimension, social space and historical time, old-turned-new knowledge arises. Mutual improvement societies in nineteenth-century New Zealand, for example, were not only interested in the increase of literacy among their members. Their objective was also to extend the intellectual horizon by reading, listening and composing new sets of rational discourse. In other words, these societies produced knowledge on the basis of available forms of public communication. For Habermas, producing and criticising knowledge are characteristic of communicative action. He argues that improvement and betterment depend “on the de facto recognition of validity claims that can be attacked internally, that is, shaken by critique, new insights, learning processes, and the like” (Habermas 1984, 192). Habermas is convinced that rational argumentation is the vehicle of improvement because it transfers beliefs, superstitions or vague inclinations into valid and certain facts. Likewise, debating societies were founded on the conviction that argumentation provided the means to improve members’ discursive skills and thus make them able participants in the democratic forum. In the 1880s and 1890s, democracy in New Zealand was marked by a “growing popular interest and participation in elections, especially in urban areas” (Atkinson 2003, 53). Atkinson shows that the introduction of the manhood suffrage in

1879, the campaign for “one man, one vote” in the late 1880s and the granting of women’s suffrage in 1893 gradually created democratic participation that was not dominated by “provincialism, personality and local interest” (78) but by national issues and conceptual oppositions like “town versus country, conservatism versus liberal, capital versus labour” (79). The urban democratic arena of the late nineteenth-century provided the intellectual elite with a platform for voicing their critique. As a consequence, late-Victorian debate in New Zealand had the potential to influence a widening public discourse.

Contrary to debate’s theoretical possibilities, the interactive quality of debate in New Zealand was eroded by processes of formalisation. In preserving the rational core of argumentation through a growing set of discursive norms, students abandoned principles of consensus that, according to Habermas, were crucial to notions of collective identity. As a consequence, debate’s social relevance was limited to its community-establishing powers. Ray notices similar developments in ante-bellum American debating societies:

Antebellum men’s debating clubs routinely were presented as free and open. Yet systematic exclusions from participation and recurring topics that fixed difference constructed an ideal citizen carefully defined as middle class, male, native born, white, and Protestant. ... The discourse of the antebellum debating clubs is thus the discourse of a permeable public, an emergent bourgeois public that simultaneously creates and subverts its own representation. (Ray 2004, 15)

Like their American counterparts, New Zealand societies, along with their social potential neglected their engagement with audience and, instead, refined their understanding of debating procedure as social and cultural conduct. Finally, the logic of argumentation was reformulated as scientific deliberation and became exclusionary rather than integrative. In view of Habermas’s holistic view of rhetoric, dialectic and logic, nineteenth-century debate in New Zealand was transformed into a form of discourse that was not suited for mutual improvement purposes. By 1902, debate in

New Zealand was on its way to becoming a specialised form of argumentative discourse that preserved its reputation as a democratic tool in an equally formalised fashion.

## Conclusion

Imposing a Habermasian reading on the development of debating societies in New Zealand provides answers that remain limited to the late-Victorian paradigm of rational discourse. Habermas's theory explains but does not transcend the rational implications of formalisation. Habermas specifically excludes any reference to non-discursive elements in communicative action and, as a consequence, cannot be used to understand formalisation processes that permeated the emotional and physical sides of debating in nineteenth-century New Zealand. This side of Habermas's approach has been challenged and the significance of physical bodies has perhaps never been as emphatically emphasised as by Judith Butler.<sup>58</sup> Michael Warner, for example, reclaims the importance of "bodies" for the public sphere and the concept of mass audience (Warner 1993, 2002; Goode 2005, 52-54).<sup>59</sup> Susan Wells in *Sweet Reason* juxtaposes Habermas and Lacan: "Habermas functions as the representative of universalism, rationality, and orientation to agreement and to coordinate action; Lacan, as the representative of desire, the unconscious, the necessarily excessive and exigent nature of discourse" (Wells 1996, 6).<sup>60</sup> Wells, Warner and Robbins call for an explanation that

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<sup>58</sup> Butler (1993) and more recently an assessment of her work in Breen and Blumenfeld (2005).

<sup>59</sup> After the translation of *Structural Transformation* in 1989, Habermas's concept of public sphere continues to receive critical attention in English-speaking countries, for example, in Crossley and Roberts (2004), Freundlieb et al. (2004) and Goode (2005). Slightly earlier, Robbins in his introductory essay to *Phantom Public Sphere* argues with Walter Lippmann that Habermas's view that individuals learn through criticism and exposure to media is mistaken: "Neither education nor the press ... could ever possibly teach people what they would need to know in order to participate competently in all public issues. 'The usual appeal to education can bring only disappointment' (27). It cannot be 'assumed that the press should do spontaneously for us what primitive democracy imagined each of us could do spontaneously for himself'" (Robbins 1993, ix).

<sup>60</sup> Wells like Robbins criticises Habermas's understanding of human progress by learning: "For Habermas, then, the capability for purposive-rational action is established once and for all as a relatively early developmental task, and further growth of this capability is simply a matter of accumulating knowledge" (Wells 1986, 261). Wells and Robbins call for a discourse that bridge Habermas's rational capacity of language and his acknowledgement of the social dimension of discourse.

bridges Habermas's faith in the rational capacity of language and his acknowledgement of the social dimension of discourse.

Recently, the shift from Habermas's linguistic turn towards recognition of the body results in a change of scholarly method. Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton address the necessity to explore "the body as method" in an interdisciplinary historical context. They suggest

that the body-as-contact-zone is a powerful analytical term *and* a useful pedagogical tool for understanding the nature and dynamics of imperial, colonial, and world histories – precisely because it allows us to navigate the dynamic relationship between representation and 'reality' and to see the work of mediation that embodied subjects perform between the domestic and the foreign, the quotidian and the cyclical, the dynamic and the static. (Ballantyne and Burton 2005a, 407)

Debating societies in New Zealand, apart from providing contact-zones for minds, were continually characterised by displays of physical presence. Morris shows that the new notion of clubs and societies in eighteenth-century Britain was dominated by physical activities like informal drinking and dining.<sup>61</sup> Collegiate debating societies in New Zealand, in a similar fashion, relied on "light refreshments" to soothe debating behaviour. These were always dispensed by the women of the society and, occasionally, female debaters were compared to "Epps's Cocoa, advertisements – grateful and comforting" (*OUR*, May 1898, 20). In connection with Habermas's epistemologically centred understanding of communication, the body provides an additional interpretative paradigm for placing the individual into a complex of community and individual experiences.

Ballantyne and Burton also emphasise the connection of body-as-method for the study of imperial dynamics in the nineteenth century. Sinha in the same volume

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<sup>61</sup> Morris relates that the Birmingham Bean Club, one of the most influential clubs, was "a loyalist dining club in which the gentlemen of the country and the principal inhabitants came together for food and confidential discussion" (Morris 1990, 396).

illustrates how club culture in colonial nineteenth-century India reinforced familiar discursive patterns in an unfamiliar environment:

Although each individual club often catered to a very different and distinctive clientele among elite Europeans in the empire, 'clubland' as a whole served as a common ground where elite Europeans could meet as members, or as guests of members, of individual clubs. These clubs represented an oasis of European culture in the colonies, functioning to reproduce the comfort and familiarity of 'home' for European living in an alien land. (Sinha 2005, 183-184)

Debating societies also evoked notions of "home" by imitating British models and continuing settler ideals of education and mutual improvement. At the same time, students transcended categories of home and Empire by combining them with the idea of England as the 'old country'. The negotiation of these specific circumstances went beyond the sphere of rational contemplation into the contact-zone of bodily language. In particular, the Boer War (1899-1902) revealed how physical expression constantly undermined attempts at regulating debate. Habermas's concept of intersubjectivity, on the one hand, informs an understanding of debate as a means of rational explanation of physical violence. On the other hand, it is expanded by taking into account the physical presence of debaters in the context of aggression.



## Chapter Two

### The “Gallant Defenders” of Fellowship and Home<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

A sense of community and belonging was established in nineteenth-century debating societies by recourse to supposedly rational and non-rational levels of human interaction. On the one hand spoken, well structured communication and norms of social conduct defined debaters’ self-perception. On the other, they established notions of “fellowship” on the basis of physical interaction, unstructured and even anonymous discourse. The formation of a group-spirit in these late-Victorian societies was based on physical and intellectual engagement with the other. Both strands of interaction contributed to what modern rhetorical theory, in particular Thomas B. Farrell, terms “social knowledge” which “encompasses a culture’s conventional wisdom” (Farrell 2001, 721).<sup>2</sup> Notions of “home” permeated and were determined by New Zealanders’ social knowledge.

Debating societies contributed to New Zealand’s social knowledge by rationally contemplating, subverting and acting out issues of current significance. Crucial to the societies’ ability to add meaning to public controversies was their flexible attitude to elements of leisure, entertainment and amusement. Debating in New Zealand was rendered a publicly acceptable pastime for man and women alike because of its explicit element of self-improvement and education.<sup>3</sup> These societies still integrated forms of

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<sup>1</sup> The term is taken from the report on the Dialectic Society discussing the problem of conscription: “On May 28th Mr. Jupp moved – ‘That some form of conscription is desirable throughout the British Dominions,’ and an animated and interesting discussion followed, certain well-known ‘gallant defenders’ taking up the cudgels heartily on behalf of the Volunteer system” (CCR, Oct. 1898, 10).

<sup>2</sup> Farrell draws on Bitzer’s concept of “rhetorical knowledge” (Farrell 1976, Bitzer 1978). Bitzer links rhetorical knowledge to the idea of a public “that is identifiable as such to the extent that it articulates significant parts of its knowledge and experiences personal facts in its public life. The public that would maintain its identity will learn, rehearse, and celebrate what it knows” (Bitzer 1978, 88).

<sup>3</sup> The spread of women’s study clubs in America, for example, coincided with severe public criticism that accused women of neglecting their role as mothers. Stevenson quotes the *Boston Transcript* that declared “homes will be ruined, children neglected, woman is straying from her sphere” (Stevenson 1991, 55). By

entertainment, like Olla Podridas, which questioned dominant and accepted norms of public culture. The respectable reputation of societies provided a safe haven for applying unconventional criticism to topics like militarism, the influence of drama, the Boer War or the significance of Empire.

As a consequence, debating societies in Victorian New Zealand produced a layer of discourse that served as an intervening space between established norms of institutionalised discourse like parliamentary politics or academic education, and alternative forms like vaudeville shows and theatre productions. The metaphor of intervening horizon also suggests that boundaries between rational and non-rational modes of discourse became blurred in the practice of deliberation. Moreover, these clubs were embedded in an imperial web-structure of information that connected their activities with similar organisations abroad. The students' response to the Boer War displayed dynamics of negotiating norms of discourse, concepts of "home" and fellowship.

This chapter explores the connection of Habermas's theory of communication and nineteenth-century forms of debate. The identification of an intervening space between reason and its application in the lifeworld helps to determine types of discourse that lay outside the realm of the spoken word. Nineteenth-century debates established fellowship based on a combination of a regulative ideal of reason and an alternative practice of non-discursive interaction. An examination of events surrounding the Boer War in New Zealand provides a historical example for these dynamics. Finally, the sense of belonging in debate that arose from a distinctly colonial setting introduces the next stage of analysis: the definition of consensus-formation and the role of *esprit de corps* in debate.

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the time New Zealand students founded their societies the public had vanquished this particular argument and did not dispute female membership. Moreover, in the United States and New Zealand, faculty and staff welcomed the founding of debating and literary societies, whereas they routinely rejected the establishment of fraternities and secret societies.

## **The Intervening Horizon: Reason and the *Lifeworld***

Habermas maintains that arguments, or in his words, validity claims, must be understood as mutually shared by those who use them because communicative behaviour relates to people's "common life-relations" in the *lifeworld* (Habermas 1984, 13). Intersubjective communication, for Habermas, is a form of interaction which overcomes the traditional subject-object model (Habermas 1987, 10) and which places reciprocal, communicative recognition at the centre of human existence. Debaters at New Zealand's colonial colleges placed equal significance on the force of communication; they observed that "means of intercommunication among students in a young institution like our college are not so many that we can afford to overlook any one of them" (MBL, *minute book*, 14 Oct. 1882). However, Habermas advances further and determines that intersubjectivity is not only established through language but also based on rational contemplation and the force of the better argument. He prioritises rationality because any strategic interests that people could have need to be subordinated to claims of truth and validity.<sup>4</sup> In Habermas's model, people relate to each other because they share habits of rational communication and physical action.<sup>5</sup> Nineteenth-century debate shows that students were aware of the communicative

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<sup>4</sup> Habermas abstains from elevating rationality to the foremost principle of communicative action because his theory would then run the risk of infinite regress. Such a theory would have to demonstrate that the distinction of rational and irrational itself would be rational in order to legitimate its operating premise. Instead, reason and rationality are built in the singular intersubjective structure of discursive communication and, thereby, in Habermas's scheme, place first the possibility of subordinating any interests of human communication (in particular strategic interests) to claims of truth and validity. Habermas not only identifies problematic implications of strategic interests governed by the primacy of teleological and strategic rationality but also prevents his theory from succumbing to the inevitable infinite regress because he introduces a mode of action and interest that is decidedly communicative and intersubjective (Habermas 1984, 86). William Rasch and Eva Knodt discuss the Habermas-Luhmann controversy of the early 1970s and the controversy surrounding the conceptualisation of strategic and communicative interest (Rasch 1991; Knodt 1994).

<sup>5</sup> Habermas argues that bodily movements are not actions: "In a certain sense, actions are realized through movements of the body, but only in such a way that the actor, in following a technical or social rule, *concomitantly executes* these movements. Concomitant execution means that the actor intends an action but not the bodily movements with the help of which he realizes it. *A bodily movement is an element of an action but not an action*" (Habermas 1984, 97).

processes they participated in. Expressed in Habermasian terms, they claimed their ‘intersubjective space’ to create bonds of fellowship. Contrary to Habermas’s analysis, however, they were creating this space not only by applying linguistic and rational means, but by venturing beyond these boundaries into the realm of emotional, irrational and physical appeal.

Habermas is criticised for his emphasis on the rational basis of intersubjectivity. In particular, Niklas Luhmann argues that in Habermas’s work the “inter” in intersubjectivity is determined by rules of discourse and the validity of propositions (Habermas and Luhmann 1971, 319).<sup>6</sup> Luhmann vehemently refutes this position. He accuses Habermas of excluding the latent role of additional interactive levels of human existence such as love, quarrel (Streit) or empathy (319).<sup>7</sup> Luhmann further argues that speakers adhere to a code of communicative behaviour but still make themselves physically present. He concedes that “only under discouragingly difficult conditions” will interlocutors be able to claim “speaking time ... making oneself visible, exposing oneself” (Luhmann 2002, 158).<sup>8</sup> Luhmann’s version of communication emphasises the

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<sup>6</sup> In 1971, Niklas Luhmann and Jürgen Habermas published essays of their controversy in *Theorie der Gesellschaft*. Both went on to contend diverse aspects of their respective work (Luhmann 1990, 1992, 2002). Later Edgar criticises Luhmann for his reading of Habermas: “In effect, it [universal pragmatics] substantiates a theme that runs throughout *Legitimation Crisis*: that legitimacy is not, as Luhmann suggests, merely a matter of the current acceptability of norms, but rather of the way in which that acceptance has been achieved (LC:98-9; CES: 188). The ideas of a freely achieved consensus and the rationality that underpins illocutionary force, both of which lie at the core of Habermas’s notions of communicative action and discourse, already contain in substantial part the germs of such a critical resources” (Edgar 2005, 153).

<sup>7</sup> “Die Unterstellung, Anmahnung und Kritik von Begründungen, ja überhaupt das Interesse an Begründungen decken ohne Zweifel nur einen Teilbereich gemeinsamen Erlebens und Handelns. Sie decken weder den Fall der Liebe, noch den Fall des Streites, noch den der bloßen Wahrnehmung des anderen, den des Ausweichens, den der praktischen Imitation, des primären Sozialisation usw. Man kann sehr gut zusammenleben auf Grund der wechselseitigen Überzeugung, daß die Begründungen des anderen falsch sind ... [The supposition, request and criticism of reasons, and in general the interest in reasons without doubt only represent a part of people’s shared experiences and actions. They account neither for love, nor for the case of conflict, mere perception of the other, avoidance, practical imitation and primary socialisation etc. People are very well able to live together on the basis of the reciprocal conviction that their partner’s reasons are wrong ....]” (Habermas and Luhmann 1971, 320, *translation mine*).

<sup>8</sup> Luhmann favours a model of communication that “sees the procedure of communication as a successful or unsuccessful *transference* of news, information, or suppositions of agreement” (Luhmann 2002, 160). Luhmann criticises Habermas’s systems-theoretical approach for its emphasis on clusters of rationality where “noting is transferred” (ibid.). Like Habermas’s tripartite structure of rhetoric, dialectic and logic,

separating function of physical existence. Even though he perceives humans as “living organisms”, his working metaphor is that of cells that “are operationally isolated” (170). Axel Honneth adopts Luhmann’s acknowledgement of the physical element of communication but transforms the understanding of communication into a “rational form of a successful mode of socialization” rather than a rational end in itself. As a consequence, communication “is now supposed to ensure only the conditions for, and no longer the fulfilment of, autonomous self-actualization” (Honneth 2004, 342). In other words, Honneth no longer considers communication as the source of social behaviour and democratic interaction. Unlike nineteenth-century debaters who regarded rational debate as the vehicle of democratic discourse and action, Honneth and Luhmann show that the connection of communication and social actualisation is not automatically initiated by the practice of rational discourse. Intersubjectivity does not fulfil communicative practice but, instead, makes it possible. As a consequence, intersubjectivity need not take the shape of rational interaction but is established by a combination of intellectual, irrational and physical contact zones.

In rhetorical theory, Farrell draws out the implications of the Habermas-Luhmann debate. Farrell points out that Habermas does not sufficiently clarify the connection of formally constructed intersubjectivity and its social reality for people: “Habermas allows for no intervening horizon between the category of ‘form of life’ (*lifeworld*) and that of ‘speech act’ or utterance” (Farrell 1993, 203). Farrell argues that “utterances are occasioned and therefore ‘perform’ validity claims; they are redeemed, therefore, not in an abstract, generalized realm of truth, but in the practical realm of decision and conduct” (ibid.). Farrell criticises the separation of theoretical and idealised rationality and the practical enactment of these regulative norms. In order to “transfer” meaning and actualise the normative implications of Habermas’s discourse ethics, Farrell

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Luhmann regards information, utterance and understanding of an utterance as intimately related and inseparable.

maintains that “they need to be performed, completed, and enacted in the world of practice” (ibid.).

Wells, like Farrell, takes into account varieties of social “inter”-action that Habermas neglects. She revises and expands Habermas’s idea of narrative as a form of communicative interaction.<sup>9</sup> Narrative is the ‘intervening horizon’ that transfers meaning in Luhmann’s sense. Well’s model includes varieties of intersubjective truth-formation that disclose characteristic features of human discourse beyond conditions of rationality: “just as Habermas’s theory of language overlooked the work of interpretation, so his treatment of narrative divorces narration from reflection” (Wells 1996, 34). In her model, people claim their intersubjective space because their rational capabilities are accompanied by creative features of language use. To this extent, intersubjectivity becomes a multi-faceted metaphor that creates meaning by use of invention, interpretation and reflection as well as reason.

The “intervening horizon” of invention, interpretation, reflection and physical interaction permeated nineteenth-century New Zealand debate. In 1897, for example, a commentator for the *Otago Review* pointed out that students were routinely breaching good manners. In particular male members of the Dunedin society “while willing and able to announce their presence by uproarious cachinnations are inconceivably sensitive as a corporeal visibility” (*OUR*, June 1897, 48). Luhmann’s “discouragingly difficult conditions” under which students claimed their presence marked the rule rather than the

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<sup>9</sup> In the second volume of *TCA*, Habermas discusses narrative as a mode of communicative engagement that takes place in the *lifeworld*: “In the communicative practice of everyday life, persons do not only encounter one another in the attitude of participants; they also give narrative presentations of events that take place in the context of their lifeworld. *Narration* is a specialized form of constative speech that serves to describe sociocultural events and objects. Actors base their narrative presentations on a lay concept of the ‘world,’ in the sense of the everyday world or lifeworld, which defines the totality of states of affairs that can be reported in true stories” (Habermas 1987, 136). Schrag like Wells criticises Habermas for perceiving narration solely as constative speech (Schrag 1992, 107-110). Schrag points out that “the modern epistemological paradigm resurfaces in Habermas’s tailoring of narrative to fit the designs of his social theory, and this in spite of his jettisoning of the primacy of consciousness and the sovereignty of the epistemological subject” (107). Schrag’s criticism parallels Wells insofar as both recognise the interpretative limitation of Habermas’s communicative paradigm.

exception. With annual Olla Podridas, in which students regularly performed their discourse, debating societies created a platform for social behaviour outside the norms of rational contemplation. Moreover, students satirised and mocked their own activities. Historical events like the Boer War were catalysts for this attitude.

Farrell in his discussion of Habermas explains that communicative processes of the *lifeworld* divulge concepts that are understood as universal points of references in assessing social reality. Applied to a historical reading, these concepts, because of their claim to universal applicability, can be used to criticise their ideological foundations:

What Habermas is suggesting is that the class interest and partisan base of bourgeois culture were able to generate and sustain a generalizable concept – namely, humanity – which itself transcended class interest. This same concept may therefore be referred back to actual practices as *criteria*, to show their deformations and distortions. Thus the institutional lifeworld is able to generate norms of critique that defy historical reduction. (Farrell 1993, 198)

In other words, rhetorical contemplation is instrumental to a critical analysis of dominant world concepts. Farrell, following Habermas, argues that the rational basis of rhetoric gives rise to conventions that are then used as points of reference for further contemplation. Habermas shows that intersubjectivity is established on the grounds of “generated norms of critique,” which make possible the identification of distinctly historicised concepts of rational discourse. Even though Habermas does not pay attention to the non-rational and non-linguistic aspects of communication, they similarly arise among norms of critique that are conducive to understanding how debate in nineteenth-century New Zealand functioned.

From a purely physical perspective, the rise of entertainment and spectacle was central to an understanding of performance in debate. Public culture in New Zealand as well as in the United States experienced a rise of entertainment that questioned the validity of existing patterns of communication. The dynamics of the Victorian attitude towards rationality and entertainment touched on debate’s essential aspects of

argumentation and social interaction and altered normative categories like truth, knowledge, reason and education.<sup>10</sup> Even though these categories functioned as “norms of critique,” their meaning was nevertheless moulded into culturally applicable conventions for knowledge production. As a consequence, debate as a means of rational deliberation was affected by these specific circumstances. Because the rational component of the discursive relation between students was modified, debate’s social role was challenged. Debating, for example, integrated purely visual means like lantern views and dramatic elements like mock trials. Alpers mentions that “dramatic readings and occasional scenes,” like ““Mr. Verdant Green is made a Mason”” (Alpers et al. 1923, xxi) were integral part of the debating programme while he was a member of the Dialectic Society. Moreover, personal and satirical comments became a regular feature of debating practice rather than an exception to the norm. Contrary to Habermas’s theory, the space that connected formal speech acts with the social reality of people was, in the late nineteenth-century, only partly occupied by rational contemplation. It was rather enriched by elements outside linguistic communication and rational discourse.

### **The Norm and Visibility of Fellowship**

Especially, during their formative years, collegiate debating societies negotiated and renegotiated norms of critique in order to project debate as an instrument for knowledge production. Original constitutions contain mission statements that primarily saw societies as gathering places for rationally minded individuals. Otago students in 1884

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<sup>10</sup> If discourse is analysed on the basis of the paradigm of rationality, oppositional pairs of regulative concepts are bound to surface. Perelman in *New Rhetoric and the Humanities*, for example, establishes such pairs of meaning for the Romantic period: reason versus imagination, reason versus sentiments, common sense versus genius, artificial versus natural and abstract versus concrete (Perelman 1979, 164). Like Perelman, I assume that New Zealanders were given to conceptualising the world in oppositions. Students were exposed to Alexander Bain’s and Henry Sidgwick’s work which promoted the separation of mind and body by means of scientific methodology and logical argumentation. The normative categories of reason, knowledge, education and truth belonged to the realm of the mind. Chapter six investigated how at the end of the century, the opposition between mind and body was increasingly questioned.



agreed that “the promotion of the mental culture of its members by means of essays, and criticism thereon, debates, readings and such other means” should be central to their meetings (Hocken, *minute book*, 29 Aug. 1884). In 1893, the student G. P. Howell at Otago argued that one aim of the society was the support of fellowship: “Teach us to know, honour, and respect each other” (Howell 1893, 133). The Dialectic Society determined “that its aim shall be to promote the fellowship and mental culture of the students and for this purpose there shall be periodical meetings of the members for the hearing, reading and delivery of essays, debates, readings and addresses and for the holding of musical events and dramatic rehearsals” (MBL, Constitution, 1878). The Auckland society adopted the motto “*nec pluribus impar*” (comparable to none) that is most famously associated with Louis XIV, and commonly denotes supremacy and exclusivity (SCUA, *minute book*, first page).<sup>11</sup> Despite their maxim, the society at Auckland followed the same universal objectives as Canterbury and Otago. It placed slightly more emphasis on the cultivation of debate and oratory.<sup>12</sup> The idea of fellowship and mental culture was traditionally expressed in lectures and debates.

Contributions like “Student Life” (1881), “University Life” (1882), “Dialectic: Its Early History and Its Place in Education” (1884), “Ourselves” (1893), “Debating and Debaters” (1895) and the undated poem “Our Dialectic” showed that professors and students were particularly interested in combining the role of higher education and debate with notions of belonging.<sup>13</sup> In 1883, Reverend Thomas Flavell, president of the

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<sup>11</sup> In view of the general promotion of fellowship in these societies, I interpret the motto as emphasising the society’s uniqueness rather than those of individual members.

<sup>12</sup> With their founding, the society established a “Gold Medal for Oratory,” which was also promoted in the college’s Calendar. (AUCC, 1888, cover page) In 1888, the secretary of the society called it the “Posnett Medal,” acknowledging Professor Posnett’s tremendous influence on the proceedings of the society. The medal in 1888 was awarded to Mr. Poland for being “successful debater of the previous year” (SCUA, *minute book*, undated, 22).

<sup>13</sup> These titles are taken from the minute books, the manuscripts in the MBL Graduate Association Papers, printed lectures and student essays as listed in the Bibliography.

society, lectured on “The Art of Debate” (MBL, *minute book*, 7 April 1883).<sup>14</sup> The title of Thomas S. Foster’s (1853-1918) lecture “The Dialectic Society as a Means of Self-Culture” expressed tendencies of placing debating societies in a context of social justification.<sup>15</sup> In 1889, the president Hutcheson M. Posnett at Auckland “gave the members some practical advice upon public speaking” (NZH, 18 May 1889, 5). Moreover, Professor Sale (1831-1922) at Otago promoted debating for its competitive qualities.<sup>16</sup> He argued that “mental activity demanded full play for our combative instincts; these were repressed in the lecture-room, and found their proper scope in debate” (OW, 31 May 1879, 17). Accordingly, the virtues of debate merged with those of education and even added aspects that New Zealand college training could not address. Part of this process of self-definition was the amplification of debate as a means of improving rational argumentation and acquisition of knowledge.

The value that the teaching staff assigned to reason was informed by a liberal and humanist intellectual framework, which considered rationality, learning and the understanding of truth the guarantors of a just order of society. In 1880, the recently

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<sup>14</sup> There is not much information available on Thomas Flavell. He was born in 1838 in England and later emigrated to New Zealand, where he became vicar of St. Mary’s in Merivale, Christchurch. In 1891, he however went back to England with his wife and two children and thus, resigned his long presidency over the college’s dialectic society.

<sup>15</sup> In 1866, thirteen-year old Thomas Scholfield Foster emigrated with his parents from London to Rangiora, New Zealand. Until 1871, he attended Christ’s College on a Junior Somes Scholarship. He became assistant master of West Christchurch School and like many of his fellow students attended Canterbury Collegiate Union classes after work. Forster was one of the first students of the established Canterbury College and gained a B.A. degree and M.A. degree in 1881. He continued his affiliation with the college and, for example, was secretary of the CCDS in 1882 and its president between 1884 and 1885. As late as 1894, he gave the society’s inaugural address on education (MBL, session programme, 1894). In 1898, his friendship with the fellow (and very active) debater and teacher, Joseph Penfound Grossmann (husband of Edith Searle Grossmann) ended rather bitterly. Grossmann had forged Forster’s signature on a promissory note. The ensuing law case enabled Foster to recover his property but Grossmann was sentenced to two years in prison. Biographical sketch based on McGeorge DNZB; Roberts DNZB; Sinclair 1983, 79-80.

<sup>16</sup> In 1861, George Samuel Sale, originally from England, emigrated to New Zealand. On arrival, he and his friends “burned their top-hats and tail-coats as a gesture of contempt for the conventions they had left behind” (Barsby DNZB). After three months working at Lake Coleridge station, Sale became the first editor of the Christchurch *Press*. He joined the Gold rush and in 1865, was sent as government commissioner to the West Canterbury goldfields. He successfully established regulations for the growing community of miners. Because of personal circumstances, in 1868, he left New Zealand for England. In 1871, he returned as first Professor for Classics and English at Otago University only to retire in 1908. Biographical information based on Barsby in DNZB.

appointed Canterbury College professor of biology Frederick Wollaston Hutton (1836-1905) opened the second term of the debating session with his address “Knowledge: How It is Acquired” (MBL, *minute book*, 24 July 1880).<sup>17</sup> In 1884, Haslam held that “education should be nothing else than the scheme of our lives” (Haslam 1884, 3). In “Student Life,” Professor John Macmillan Brown (1845-1935) maintained that education is life’s work, and that toiling for one’s existence should be fully embraced and regarded as pleasure and gratification.<sup>18</sup> Whatever occupation a person chooses, “consecution of thought, freshness of imagination, and vigour and accuracy of expression are essentials in all professions” (Brown 1881, 26). In other words, learning, even though it demanded considerable effort, promised students the rewards of seeing beyond the surface of reality by way of cultivating the critical capacities of the individual:

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<sup>17</sup> Hutton originally came from England. He began his career at King’s College, London studying applied sciences, and until 1858 had fought in the Crimean and Indian wars. In 1860, he rose to the rank of captain. Eventually, in 1866, after his marriage he decided to travel to New Zealand. By that time, he already had acquired a modest reputation as a geologist and promoter of Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*. Once settled in Waikato, he soon joined the Geological Survey and in 1874, was promoted to provincial geologist of Otago. In this capacity he began to lecture in zoology and geology at the University of Otago and in 1877, became professor of natural science. His lecture entitled “Origin of Life” (1878) to the members of the debating society is testimony to his brief influence in Dunedin and most certainly contained a strong defence of Darwin’s views on evolution. Because of the small number of degree students at Otago, Hutton moved to Christchurch and became professor of biology at Canterbury College. After Julius von Haast’s death, Hutton was curator of Canterbury Museum (until 1902) and continued to exert his influence on the study of flora and fauna in New Zealand. Hutton had a significant impact on the scientific advancement of New Zealand zoology and biology. This biographical account is based on Parton in DNZB; Thomson 1885; *Otago Daily Times*, 3 August 1878, 2; Hocken, *minute book*, 2 August 1878.

<sup>18</sup> John Macmillan Brown, originally from Scotland, was appointed lecturer for Classics and English at Canterbury College in 1874. He became a prominent Canterbury citizen and later married one of his former students, Helen Connon, the first woman in the British Empire to obtain an honours degree. As a teacher he appears to have been genuinely liked. He entertained some of his students (among them Oscar T.J. Alpers) at home and his Sunday walks with students were famous. He lent students books and took an interest in their later professional careers. However, his colleagues give different accounts of his personality. For example, Arnold Wall, lecturer at Canterbury College during Brown’s time, relates in *Long and Happy* that Haslam and Brown disliked each others company. Even students noticed the “unacknowledged cold war” between them. (MBL, Gardner Papers, Lillian Blyth interview) His daughter Millicent Amiel Baxter likewise sketched a rather ambiguous picture of the man who dominated the teaching of English at Canterbury College (Baxter 1981). Because of serious health issues, John Macmillan Brown resigned the chair of English in 1895. He travelled extensively and extended the circle of his intellectual acquaintances through meetings with Walt Whitman, Oliver Wendell Holmes and W.D. Howells. Brown later devoted much of his time to the study of Pacific cultures. His work on the ethnology of Polynesian people and the Maori was strongly criticised by Sir Apirana Ngata, a former student and member of CCDS and AUDS, and by Te Rangi Hiroa (Peter Buck). The biographical information is taken from Hankin in DNZB. Lowell-Smith recently published an equally ambiguous but more personal account of Brown’s and Helen Connon’s married life (Lovell-Smith 2004, 56-74).

A student with such a purpose becomes reason incarnate and discerns the vulgar from the great; he sees beneath the appearance and can tell, maugre the hisses or plaudits of the world, what is eternal and what is momentary. He is alone the seer of the world, and in searching his own mind searches what is best in the world's. (29)

Brown advocated the view that education enables the enlightened individual to transcend common opinion on grounds of logical criticism and enter the realm of Platonic ideals. Accordingly, the educated individual was assigned the role of judge who identified eternal truths. Journalists in Christchurch reviewed Brown's speech and placed considerable emphasis on the "patriotic ring" of his address (*LT*, 4 April 1881, 5). Brown's assertion that study was essential to individual maturity and progress and his advice to "never lose faith in the destinies of your country" (*ibid.*) created a connection of learning and colonial identification that the press presented as the central tenet of the lecture. Brown promoted a version of fellowship that relied on the individual. Through rational contemplation in the form of logical argumentation the individual was able to relate to others.

In 1895, Scobie Mackenzie in "Debating and Debaters" put forth a more practical and entertaining type of rational interaction in debate. He insisted that "debating a question is the only means known to us of finding out the truth on that particular question" (Mackenzie 1895, 130). His depiction of the process resembled a battle; a question should be stripped "of all the fallacies and falsehoods that have got entwined with it, tear it to bits, in fact, and the remnant is very likely to be truth" (*ibid.*). The press was sympathetic to "his witty remarks," the speech's "terseness, its racy expressions, and its supply of illustrations" (*OW*, 19 Sept. 1895). Mackenzie suggested that logical truth was the sole goal of debate. His style demonstrated that students were also responsible for the engaging quality of their argumentation. They were, in other words, experts in the art of winning oratory. Their ability to "tear" a question "to bits" with elocutionary force provided a unifying momentum for otherwise isolated

interlocutors. Like Brown with his patriotic allusions, Mackenzie wanted the students to understand that, in order to render logical prowess publicly relevant, it had to be accompanied by a social dimension like pleasure and laughter.

There are however some subtle differences between the early understandings of truth in Brown's lecture and the later ideas of Mackenzie. Brown adheres to an understanding of truth that, in Stevenson's words, "referred to a divine and timeless world of meaning that transcends human differences" (Stevenson 1991, 139). Brown's speech transformed the debater into a "seer" who had the right kind of perception in order to make sense of his environment. As is explained in Chapter six, nineteenth-century debate acquired a reliance on scientific observation that was conducive to attitudes like Brown's. Brown's concept is exclusive; it is the result of a scholar's secluded contemplation and observation of the world.<sup>19</sup> Practical elements were at play, when Mackenzie formulated his ideas of truth in public discourse. It remained a universal concept but by no means isolated from the influences of his fellow New Zealand citizens. Mackenzie placed debate in the context of what a student in 1899 termed "the practical nature of colonial intelligence" (Natural Conditions, 1899, 112). Mackenzie as a person was deeply rooted in the political realities of New Zealand and dependent on the benevolence of his voters. His version of the function of truth and logical argumentation in debate was informed by a reliance on a commonly shared acknowledgement of the other and her ability to actively engage in rational deliberation.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Brown did not entirely subscribe to a Platonic world of ideas in which the philosopher was the only one able to "see". In the same lecture he maintained that the student "sits with his face to life and is not like the unphilosophic crowd in Plato's cave who study the mere shadows thrown by the passing realities behind them. He knows that the world, however old, is still young and flexible" (Brown 1881, 17). As a result, Brown's vision of the scholar was embedded in social and historical contexts but remained highly individualistic.

<sup>20</sup> Stevenson and Bender discuss the self-projection of intellectuals in the American context (Stevenson 1991, 137-155; Bender 1993, 3-15). The term "intellectual" came into use only in the twentieth century. The mid-nineteenth-century American public used the term as an adjective to describe a quality of mind rather than a person. However, the use of the term carried positive connotations of authority and

Mackenzie's versions of rational fellowship dominated the way debaters perceived the role and purpose of debate in New Zealand. The truly great person required others to join her in the quest of reason. As a consequence, to relate reason to the world and to best profit from the learning that the university had to offer, professors recommended communication with fellow students. Education and debate were therefore deemed essentially social experiences. In 1882, Professor Cook in "University Life" advocated the establishment of clubs to nourish the community spirit among New Zealand students. From Cook's point of view, learning pursued in utter solitude did not enhance the true virtues of college life because a student is "a living member of a living world" and should not solely be concerned with books (Cook 1882, 3). Moreover, each member of Canterbury College, he held, "has important relations with other dwellers in the same world, [as one] who influences them and is in turn influenced by them" (ibid.). Eventually, Julius von Haast (1822-1887) in his 1883 presidential address associated the fundamental purpose of education with moral and intellectual duties and responsibilities of citizenship:<sup>21</sup>

[T]he great aim of all education should be not to make only wiser, but better men and women, to elevate their moral and intellectual sense, to open their minds to all that is great and noble in nature and mankind, to make the heart and intellect, the emotional and the reasoning faculties, form a close union. (Haast 1883, 7)

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distinction because their influence depended on their interaction with their publics. Without them they could not maintain their status. Their participation in (rather than their invention of) public discourse secured their stance. The intellectual of the late nineteenth century was "obliged to make a public instead of finding one ready made," as Herbert Croly, founding editor of the *New Republic*, expressed it in 1909 in *The Promise of American Life* (qtd. in Bender 1991, 144).

<sup>21</sup> Julius von Haast, originally from Germany, arrived in New Zealand in December 1858, when he incidentally met the Austrian geologist Ferdinand Hochstetter and began to explore the Western colonial territories. In 1860, he came to Canterbury when he was called upon to examine the area of the proposed tunnel between Lyttelton and Christchurch. He subsequently settled in Christchurch and extensively surveyed the Canterbury provincial district including the harsh Mount Cook area. In 1862, he founded the Philosophical Institute of Canterbury. In 1861, he had started a modest museum, which obtained its own building in 1870. The next year, von Haast was among the group of people who promoted the idea of Canterbury College, an institution for higher education affiliated to the University of New Zealand. In 1876, he eventually became the college's first professor of geology, a position he held until his death. In the following years, his scientific reputation spread and several honorary degrees were conferred upon him. He died in Christchurch in 1887. The information is based on Maling in DNZB, Heinrich von Haast's account of his father's life (1948), and Bickerton (1884).

Von Haast seized the opportunity to introduce the students to the traditional Socratic combination of civil participation, education and the art of public speaking, which also significantly fed into an understanding of consensus. Von Haast's concept of an educated man or woman, moreover, stood out because it adhered to a humanist ideal that integrated emotions and perceived individuals as a genuine combination of intellect and feeling. Cook and von Haast confirmed Mackenzie's practical approach towards debate. They formulated a version of debate that considered the promotion of fellowship a civic duty in a world beyond the confines of the university.

Debaters at Canterbury College, Otago University, and Auckland University College recognised their professors' emphasis on rationality as the underpinning of their social existence. They moulded notions of intellectual maturity and civic responsibility into their own version of acquisition and contemplation of knowledge and public involvement. Their topics never lacked ambition. In 1879, the debating society in Dunedin read essays on such normative issues as "Truth" and "What is the chief end of man" (Hocken, *minute book*, 12 Sept. and 15 Aug. 1879). In 1882, a Miss Edger read an essay on "The Ethics of Debate" before the Canterbury College Dialectic Society (MBL, *minute book*, 22 April 1882).<sup>22</sup> The same year, debaters in Otago listened to a contribution entitled "Literary and Debating Societies and the Duties of Their Members" (Hocken, *minute book*, 13 Oct. 1882). In subsequent years, essays on the merits of debating and education were discussed occasionally. In 1891, the Auckland debating society addressed the question: "Does Education add to Human Happiness?" (SCUA, *minute book*, 19 Aug. 1891). Taking the final vote, all members agreed that it did. After the first period of actively contemplating the worth of debate, more topics of immediate civic interest dominated the programmes. Yet some members noticed the lax debating discipline in the maturing years of the societies and deplored the absence of

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<sup>22</sup> In 1882, according to the original constitution Lillian and Kate M. Edger were members of the society. It is not clear, which one of the sisters wrote the essay.

“quality and spirit” (*OUR*, June 1895, 56). A certain “Wellwisher” welcomed Scobie Mackenzie’s lecture, hoping that it would “bear rich fruit next year, and will make our debaters more what they should be” (*ibid.*).

Students expressed dissatisfaction with the adumbration of worthiness and would forcefully expatiate on the value of education and deliberation. In 1893, G. P. Howell in his prize-winning essay for the Dunedin debating society professed the opinion that members of the club should acknowledge their duty to humankind: “Let us then as human beings remember the part we have to play in life; and how, in the youth and beauty of our manhood and womanhood, let us begin our strivings to reach that high ideal of manly perfection that approaches to the nature of eternal beings” (Howell 1893, 132). The unattainable ideal of human perfection is extrapolated from and maintained by the art of speaking, the possibilities that accompany it and the responsibilities ensuing from one’s public station. In other words, members of the debating society prepared themselves “to be speakers, preachers, lawyers, and orators, who are destined to ... govern the fate of their country” (134).<sup>23</sup> Howell’s spirited defence of the powers of eloquence is the corollary of an idealised tradition of public debate and oratory that harkens back to his teachers’ lessons. Howell employed expressions of warfare when he specified the means by which he intended to obtain this influential place in society: “Let us show our courage in the war of words, and learn to use our logical weapons with deftness and skill” (133). Amidst the reality of competition for a limited number of socially influential positions in the colony, Howell defended the communal spirit of debating societies with the assertion that “care for the feelings of others is a mark of true *esprit de corps*” (134). Ray in the American debating context shows how ambiguous this notion of collective experience becomes when set into a competitive framework of

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<sup>23</sup> “Preachers” and “lawyers” were the only practical professions in Howell’s list and it is significant that lawyers and not politicians were meant to “govern the fate of their country.” Stone illustrates that this preference was not particularly extraordinary, giving that the profession and its practitioners flourished in the colony (Stone 1988).



debating. The “*esprit de corps*” only intensifies the impression of debating “as an entertaining display of rhetorical skill” (Ray 2004, 6) because the victory of the debater is achieved among proficient and scrupulous judges.

Thus, the nineteenth-century perspective on debating in New Zealand and the United States pays tribute to a humanistic ideal of education that confers on the normative aspects of argumentation the probative force of collective experience. Members’ genuine debating experience consists of a combination of combative and languid moments that never questioned their essential grounding in rational understanding. In Habermas’s words, students of debate are able to communicate despite the boundaries of their diverging lifeworlds because they base their discourse on the perspective of a world that is mutually shared. A claim to truth is seen as universal because it emerges from the unconditional validity of their utterances (Habermas 2001, 24). It is, thus, the latent use of the term truth as criticism that reveals the structural basis of intersubjective communication in the nineteenth century.

The idealised belief in the force of mutually shared reason constitutes one aspect of “inter”subjectivity in late nineteenth-century New Zealand debating societies. In academic discourse, truth and rationality were routinely juxtaposed with faith and emotion. Professor Haslam explicitly contrasts the Greeks’ superstitions with the nineteenth-century perspective on critical knowledge. Socrates’ Greece “was an age of faith. Men had not learnt to be critical. They judged by their feelings only. Whatever impressed them with its novelty, or beauty, or majesty, at once commanded from them that allegiance which we are accustomed to give only to the irresistible claims of reasoned truth” (Haslam 1884, 8). In 1897, Mackechnie in a similar fashion exemplified how deeply engrained this belief really was among the New Zealand intellectual elite. Before the New Zealand Institute, he emphasised that the conviction of reaching reliable forms of truth would eventually elevate a person:

We frequently fail – fall short of what we intended; but the ideal remains before us; and if we are true to our better selves we as repeatedly strive again. These attempts to rise in the scale of being – the very discipline of life – have an educational and elevating force. They are not opposed to, but sanctioned by, reason, and tend to raise us to a higher level than that of mere animal life. We reach this end ... by individualism, ever developing higher resolves and a nobler personality. By this means we attain, if we ever can attain, the highest expression of humanity – its ideal perfection. (Mackechnie 1897, 118)

Mackechnie's belief in individual betterment by means of the normative quality of reason combined with his practical idea of achievement among fellow citizens and deeply rooted beliefs in liberal education gave rise to an ideal of practical humanity. Debating thus grounded became a highly normative exercise for late-Victorians; it provided a test for their social relevance and competence.

That relevance was understood within the regulative framework of public respectability and culture. Bailey in reviewing Britain's public culture observes that respectability "primarily enjoined moral rectitude, but in addition, it also demanded economic continence and self-sufficiency" (Bailey 1998, 33). Members of debating and literary societies because they practised a legitimate pastime activity, conformed to the social and moral demands of their immediate community. However, respectability's "attainment was a matter of independent individual achievement through an ongoing process of self-discipline and self-improvement" (ibid.). New Zealand's intellectual elite embraced these values and put forth an Arnoldian version of all-round practical culture. As early as 1884, Professor Black opened the Dunedin debating session with a lecture on "Allround Culture." The same year, students at Canterbury College discussed the impact of Matthew Arnold's perspective on the cultivation of high culture. In 1901, James R. Wilkinson, a former member of the CCDS and still associated with the college, propounded the argument that students had to embrace culture as "one purpose, end and aim of higher learning" because contemporary definition of it included "Science, Art, Ethics, and ... (the intellectual part) of professions, pursuits and

livelihoods” (Wilkinson 1901, 7-8). Culture for Wilkinson comprised what Kett described in the American context as “a body of knowledge ... and the personal qualities elicited by the acquisition of culture” (Kett 1994, 142-3). He, like Black in Dunedin, demanded: “let us be Universalists, and vastly all-round” (Wilkinson 1901, 9). Wilkinson’s statement was uttered with the confidence of the New Zealand intellectual elite which sought to create universal cultural standards for the New Zealand colonial public.<sup>24</sup>

At the end of the nineteenth century, this rather ambitious understanding of deliberation increasingly proved insufficient in the face of colonial actualities. Farrell suggests two solutions when “validity claims of normative reason ... intersect with real practices of speech” (Farrell 1993, 199). On the one hand, Habermas’s and the late-Victorians’ ideal suppositions might intersect with everyday institutional practices; on the other, these claims might come to function only in a “rarefied realm in which the equally rarefied argumentation paradigm is applicable (science and perhaps legal reasoning)” (ibid.). Farrell’s second answer is rather limited in its scope. A paradigm of argumentation does not only function within a specific discipline. This “rarefied realm” might permeate a practical space such as debating. As Professor Haslam and his students would have it: “We are accustomed to give only to the irresistible claims of reasoned truth” (Haslam 1884, 8). At the same time, this rational framework possibly enables at once respectable but also amusing forms of argumentative discourse. The Canterbury student club “Chichelian Senate” aimed at mimicking parliamentary

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<sup>24</sup> Like McAloon, Gibbons argues that “those classes which had most power – the gentry, the urban *haute bourgeoisie*, and the lower middle class – established the hegemonic values for the whole society; that is to say, the ruling classes successfully projected their particular ideological views to the extent that the subordinate classes had little influence” (Gibbons 1992, 309). I believe that Reid’s and McAloon’s term “intellectual elite” better captures what Gibbons describes. His depiction of the *haute bourgeoisie* as more refined than the lower middle class is not conducive to an understanding of New Zealand’s public culture because it tends to exclude transitions between these supposedly separated groups. I however agree with Gibbons that those in power – be it intellectual, financial or political – attempted to transform their values into regulative norms for others.

strategies.<sup>25</sup> Its members' performances incorporated everything regarded as culturally "universal" and sincere and yet undercut the display of rationality through mockery: "Subtle in its reasoning, practical in its issues, scholarly in its style, it [the Governor's speech] was the brilliant climax of one who was at once a man of affairs, a philosopher, a classic, and a rhetorician" (*CCR*, Oct. 1898, 39). As a consequence, Farrell's analysis is feasible insofar as the two solutions are regarded as a genuine whole. I suggest that rarefied realms of discourse give rise to new forms of discursive interaction by engaging "with everyday institutional practices". By this standard, nineteenth-century debate encouraged the formal as well as social contextualisation of reason and truth. Maurice Charland echoes this emphasis when he criticises Farrell's position as being still logocentric. Charland instead reasons that "rhetoric does not only occur in the polis, the political community of consensus and mutual respect, but also in the pagus, the outlying regions of civil society" (Charland 1994, 342). In other words, formalised debate that heralds scientific argumentation enters civil society because it is still exercised in the boundaries of a traditional discursive paradigm that is valid in public. The introduction of Olla Podrida evenings represented this subversive effect of a combination of respectable discourse and supposedly uncivilised elements of social interaction.

Clubs, associations and societies, from the time of their creation in the eighteenth century, incorporated elements of amusements. Literary and debating societies belonged to the Victorian sphere of 'rational recreation and leisure' and education.<sup>26</sup> Professor

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<sup>25</sup> There is no mention of the group in any other records. According to the one source, it was founded in 1891 to formalise the usual gatherings of the "College House" at Study No. 2. Sir William S. Marris, Sir Apirana Ngata, H.B. Watson, Sir Earnest Rutherford, G.G.S. Robinson, T.W. Cane, Mr. Northcote and the Atkinson brothers were among the members. Notably, all of them were also enrolled in the debating society.

<sup>26</sup> Borsay in his history of British leisure argues that 'rational recreation' was taken as 'serious' leisure. "Such pastimes often 'mimic' work or education. This has the advantage of legitimizing leisure in a society in which work and learning are dominant ethics" (Borsay 2006, 7). Borsay develops this argument by pointing out that rational recreation does not necessarily exclude elements outside its paradigm of seriousness: "An evening class might be *both* educational and recreational, charitable work *both* a branch of civil life and a pastime" (*ibid.*). Debating societies in New Zealand were part of education, leisure, work and civic life. Like Borsay and Cunningham, I do not understand leisure as "the time which is left

Sale considered debating a university “attraction” that ideally combined academic instruction and leisure because in England “the amusement of the place [college] had as much to do in fitting one for the world as the work in the class room had” (*OW*, 2 July 1896, 13). At the end of the nineteenth century, the significance of amusement for these clubs changed because entrepreneurs strove to provide middle-class friendly entertainment.<sup>27</sup> A debating evening was often “pleasantly spent in social intercourse; with songs, music, and recitations kindly contributed by various members and friends” (*SCUA*, *minute book*, 30 Sept. 1891). Debating societies extended their syllabi by including Olla Podrida and Farrago evenings, “In Memoriam” essay readings, drama productions like “Much Ado About Nothing”, singsongs and public concerts.

In particular, Olla Podridas made visible the fellowship among debaters by utilising the anonymity of the author, humour, satire, audience participation and the acting out of written texts. Entertainment’s separate status within the debating programmes was subverted and both debate and amusement began to merge and even to be commercialised. Mock trials, parliamentary debates and intercollegiate debating tournaments heightened the amusement aspect of the fortnightly sessions. In 1892, the Otago University debating society bought a piano to upgrade the quality of their

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over after work” (Cunningham 1990, 279); instead, I regard leisure as an integral part of late nineteenth-century New Zealand public culture that permeated public and private life. In England, Morris shows that the Masonic Order and the Freemasons very early provided the necessary social discipline to stage subscription concerts or organise dances. Where the public failed to raise money or create an air of respectability and prestige, voluntary organisations stepped in (Morris 1990, 402). In New Zealand, McAloon regards the Christchurch Savage Club in a similar light. It was “essentially a social club, with the attraction of affording its members a respite from domesticity” and the sphere of the socially familiar (McAloon 2000, 206).

<sup>27</sup> Ashby in his study of American amusement reviews Phineas T. Barnum’s strategies “to refashion theatre audiences along middle-class lines” (Ashby 2006, 49). Barnum’s plan was to create a norm for middle-class rational entertainment; the lecture room was paramount to this endeavour. “As Barnum said: ‘My plan is to introduce into the lecture room highly moral and instructive domestic dramas, written expressly for my establishment and so constructed as to please and edify while they possess a powerful *reformatory tendency*’” (50). In New Zealand, acceptable bourgeois amusement was just as much characterised by a “reformatory tendency” as Barnum’s creations. As a result, in New Zealand, a range of high and low amusement was available to an interested audience.

meetings (*OUR*, Comm. Issue 1893, 41).<sup>28</sup> The introduction of lantern or limelight views increasingly improved the display of opening addresses and made them attractive and visible to a large audience. In the 1890s, attendance at public events organised by the three collegiate societies frequently reached 150 or 200. As Borsay says, these events “mimicked” education and as a consequence contributed to a body of “serious leisure” that provided an atmosphere of respectability for the intellectual elite of New Zealand (Borsay 2006, 7).

Despite being presented as innocent student amusements, entertaining features already contained aspects that altered notions of infallible truth and uncontested primacy of reason. In 1887, the Dialectic Society introduced Olla Podrida evenings. The *Otago University Review* in his commemorative issue of 1893 related the fact that in 1889, Dunedin adopted the concept and termed the evenings “Farrago”.<sup>29</sup> By 1897, the Auckland University debating society frequently practiced Olla Podridas (*NZH*, 6 Oct. 1897, 5). Whereas “In Memoriam” evenings were abandoned after a short time, all three societies kept Olla Podridas on their programmes because of their popularity. The first evening of this sort in Christchurch consisted in the reading of twelve humorous contributions of prose and poetry. In later years, the contributions were divided into essay writing and speaking competitions. Strict anonymity was preserved in the presentation of the texts. After all contributions had been read, the meeting would vote on the best piece and those who submitted a text would disclose their identity. Sometimes contributors refused to acknowledge their authorship and remained anonymous.<sup>30</sup> Many of the contributions were subsequently published in the *Reviews* of

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<sup>28</sup> Pianos were one of the most important musical instruments in New Zealand settler communities. Stenson and Olssen point out that “[b]y 1901, nearly 4000 pianos were imported annually, enough for every fourth occupied building” (Stenson and Olssen 1997, 308).

<sup>29</sup> “‘Farrago’ was borrowed from our sister Society in Canterbury College. Although a humorous writer in the Review took great exception to the name bestowed in this new development, it proved a signal success” (*OUR*, Comm. Issue 1893, 40).

<sup>30</sup> In 1893 in Dunedin the identity of the winner could not be determined: “Nine items, complying with the conditions of originality and brevity, were presented on the first evening, and in order to preserve the

the colleges. Olla Podridas created a sense of belonging without identifying gender, age or the duration of membership. In 1899, “Almamatriculus” investigated for the Olla Podrida “The Present State of Polite (and Impolite) Laughter in Australasia” (Almamatriculus 1899, 29) which revealed a varied landscape of “common or garden laughs,” “silent laughs” and other “species”. In the end, the author wished to “bid farewell, merely offering my sincerest condolences to the man of humour (*I speak in the common gender*)” (30, italics mine). Only towards the end of the century did societies begin to dispense refreshments at the end of the evening, which were usually prepared by the female members of the society and thus re-introduced a gendered element to the fellowship experience.<sup>31</sup> Apart from this additional recreational element, originality, brevity, literary merit and humour were the bedrock of an Olla Podrida’s success. Questions of truthfulness did not determine the merit of each contribution. Acute argumentation only hindered the triumph of the contestant. Instead, intelligent wit (not sarcasm) and an instinct for the ridiculous in daily collegiate routine secured large appreciation for the submitted piece. Mr. Norris, for example, “struck a rich vein of twenty-four-carat humour in his winning contribution” (*CCR*, Oct. 1898, 11). Even though Olla Podrida meetings did not abandon gender stereotypes, they attempted to create a sphere of participation that was potentially egalitarian.

Audience participation and anonymity were of crucial importance to the concept of Olla Podrida and generated a moment of obscurity and suspense in electing a winner. Compared to the later popular debating contests, the entire audience still voted on the basis of what they had heard and seen performed by the secretary or other members.

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desired anonymity, were read by the secretary Mr. J.R. Macdonald. The vote taken at the close decided that the ‘Capping Song’ was the most meritorious, but the prize-winning author declined to reveal his identity” (*OUR*, Comm. Issue 1893, 40).

<sup>31</sup> “At the close of the programme light refreshments were dispensed by the ladies” (*NZH*, 12 Dec. 1902, 6). In 1893, the *Otago University Review* remarked that tea and cake “may have influenced the attendance” at the society’s meetings (*OUR*, Comm. Issue 1893, 41). In the 1880s the introduction of refreshments during the intervals became popular in theatres. Students might have adhered to this practice for Olla Podrida gatherings.

The charisma and presence of the author was not relevant. The element of disguise allowed them to be daring in their criticism. Seizing the opportunity of questioning cultural norms in the safe realm of the amusing, students embraced the task wholeheartedly. Students W. L. Scott and E. J. Parr won the Olla Podrida of 1900 with a short piece entitled “The Pantehnicon.” Therein, they prognosticate the future state of Canterbury College: “Intellectual enlightenment is now compulsory, and no man or woman may be married without the prior attainment of a degree” (Parr and Scott 1900, 29). They describe the pandemonium that was to result from providing higher education “free, gratis, and for nothing to all honest sons and daughter of toil” (28). Scott and Parr chose to reveal their identity. In 1901, an anonymous writer upheld the act and stuck to his nom de plum. He described a fictional royal visit to Canterbury College. The story ridiculed the Premier by letting him utter a most unfortunate speech, thus, branding him an appallingly bad orator:

He [the Premier] then stated that it was extremely gratifying to note that the number of young persons attending the University was increasing year by year, and pointed out the singular fact that the number of criminals and lunatics was increasing in the same ratio. By a happy allusion to the seal of the College, he showed that the sheep and the plough went hand-in-hand with education. (Newspaper Cutting, 1901, 34)

The author’s irony is particularly acid when taking into account that in the previous issue of the *Review*, Wilkinson had heralded culture with the motto “Here’s is to my Spade, emblem and type of the Real, of bare Utility, and of naked Truth” (Wilkinson 1901, 9). The urge to lampoon college culture and its emphasis on the useful insinuates that it was something ostensibly characteristic of New Zealand public culture; that it was something the collegiate Olla Podrida audience would instantaneously recognise as familiar and typical.

McAloon demonstrates that in late-Victorian New Zealand culture, values like education and work were typically promoted by the colonial rich who exerted most



influence, politically as well as economically.<sup>32</sup> “With their high degree of visibility and leadership,” they created realities for colonial life that effected students as much as other members of the public (McAloon 1996, 60). As a consequence, the identification of prominent public figure with money, influence, work-ethics and educational interests was part of what Farrell terms “social knowledge”. Based on their confidence in the argumentative paradigm of mutual rationality, students could undermine propositions in favour of liberal education or respectable culture without threatening the foundation of their beliefs. Nineteenth-century college students were not constantly striving for inclusion in a well-informed, truth-oriented rhetorical community; rather they established settings where reason and truth could be addressed through laughter. Most of the *Olla Podrida* contributions were almost devoid of serious content; they were composed as fun items and were perceived accordingly.

Laughter and jokes were welcomed as beneficial recreation by the students’ body. In 1901, “Gravitas” called for more jokes for students because s/he believed that “a good hearty laugh” would “brighten his brain, expand his chest and make him a new man” (Gravitas 1901, 27). For “Gravitas”, jokes were the necessary counterpart to rational education. If both could be combined a graduate “will have become a peaceable, law-abiding citizen, with a rather select taste in puns” (28). As a consequence, fellowship among debaters was established along the lines of rational discourse as well as incantations of non-rational texts. The non-rational and humorous element was regarded as the physical relief from mental work. At the end of the nineteenth century, the sincere belief in the infallibility of rational argumentation created a paradigm which by its confrontation with “everyday institutional practices” corrupted its own supposedly

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<sup>32</sup> McAloon argues that New Zealand’s rich were “effectively a British bourgeoisie” combined with an almost fanatical work-ethic: “The rich justified their wealth by their role in promoting and leading the economic development of the colony. The whole purpose of colonization had been to civilize the wilderness and make it economically productive, to bring these South Pacific islands into the orbit of British commerce and society” (McAloon 1996, 60).

invariant standards. As a consequence, New Zealand debate functioned as a specialised form of argumentation as well as a method to transcend colonial conventions. This modus operandi specifically surfaced in students' performance of an "us" sentiment during the Boer War.

### **The Boer War and the Performance of "Us"**

The Boer War (1899-1902) is often connected with a rising national sentiment among New Zealanders at the end of the nineteenth century. Scholarship of New Zealand history commonly associates the Boer War with the first hesitant attempts of a war-enthusiastic New Zealand public to formulate distinctly colonial New Zealand virtues (and vices).<sup>33</sup> It is beyond the scope and outside the field of interest of this thesis to comprehensively discuss levels of New Zealand nationalism, the idea of the nation-state or the implications of nineteenth-century understandings of empire. Instead, I will restrict myself to the investigation of those issues within the assumed paradigm of fellowship. Among students, the Boer War instantiated a search for home and belonging. The end of the war, gave New Zealanders in general an opportunity to welcome their soldiers "home" to New Zealand.<sup>34</sup> New Zealanders engagement in Africa also allowed them to associate "Home" with England or the Empire. Students during the war performed their ideas of "us" either during public celebration in New Zealand or as soldiers overseas. In confrontation with the Boers, students could locate elements of the "Other". In 1894, the student D. A. Strachan was convinced that New Zealand would rise to become a great nation in its own respect: "for greatness consists, not in individuals but in relations; things small in themselves become great by their relation to circumstances" (Strachan 1894, 101). The ensuing discussion illustrates how the performance solidified a notion of fellowship among debaters that emphasised

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<sup>33</sup> Mein Smith 2005, 118-119; King 2003 and 2004, 285-93; Crawford and McGibbon 2003; Belich 2001, 78-81; Belich 1986, 125-142; Sinclair 2000, 227-33; Phillips 1996, 132-158.

<sup>34</sup> *Tuapeka Times*, 7 June 1902, 2; *Otago Witness*, 4 June 1902, 27; 11 June 1902, 28.

relations rather than individuals. Mackenzie's belief in practical truth and elocutionary appeal to a sympathetic crowd were manifest in students' discussion. According to Strachan, New Zealand should imitate Rome, "a warlike people, a more practical" with a "popular form of learning" (99). Debaters' notion of "us" arose to equal parts from a prescribed civil norm as well as the performance of fellowship in and beyond debating societies.

Much of nineteenth-century New Zealand's public culture was determined by its position in the Empire. Contemporary discussion of these terms is fraught with difficulties and slippery terminology. Often they can only be defined contextually. Tony Ballantyne has made available for further deliberation the trans-national and trans-imperial understanding of British Empire. Ballantyne explains that "we can conceive of the empire as a series of archives, each arising out of local concerns, but braided together, however imperfectly, by institutional exchanges, webs of personal correspondence and shared bodies of knowledge" (Ballantyne 2002a, 8). He establishes this "series" as a complex of "webs" that "underpin the operation of the empire's economic system, enable the transplantation of legislation between colonies, facilitate the dissemination of scientific information across national borders and mould the discourses that structured the British Empire" (Ballantyne and Moloughney 2006, 71). MacKenzie follows a similar line of argument when he analyses the activities of imperial institutions as "preventing imperial propaganda from becoming institutionally ossified. Each new society represented not so much a dissipation of effort as a fresh infusion of energy at critical moments" (MacKenzie 1986, 148). Like Ballantyne, MacKenzie locates the force of imperial information strategies outside London and the Imperial Institute. Ballantyne emphasises that empire fostered multiple colonial centres that were part of a complex vibrant network of influences and counter-influences (Ballantyne 2002a, 2005a). This interpretation echoes Anderson's formulation of "print

capitalism” (Anderson 1991, 40) and nineteenth-century monopolisation of written documentation and scientific inquiry in cementing imperial reality. Without the enormous increase of print commerce, the progress of communication infrastructure, writing activities (private and public) and the belief in the reliability of scientific inquiry, local and imperial superimposed webs would have atrophied. Ballantyne points out that New Zealand’s geographical location possibly slowed information flow but did not isolate it from the “complex intellectual traffic that operated over great distances within the empire” (Ballantyne 2005a, 96).<sup>35</sup>

Implications of Ballantyne’s imperial communication networks are indirectly referenced in Attridge when he argues that discourse as form “can undermine function and that there are discrepancies between form and particular representations, which can undermine the ideological function of the work” (Attridge 2003, 11). In other words, Attridge adduces that imperial structures during the Boer War were ubiquitously shaped and consolidated by the ambivalent relation of discourse and the validity of values and ideas. Habermas emphasises the intersubjective nature of rationality that enables communication; debate similarly relies on a highly structured method of communication that facilitates (as well as “undermines”) discursive processes. Benoit et al. and O’Keefe propose that debate facilitates “collaborative argument production,” which denotes that participants jointly produce an argument in a dialogic process.<sup>36</sup> “Intersubjective” in a late nineteenth-century context implies that not only layers of individual argumentation made possible the production of opinions, but that further imperial, inter-colonial webs consolidated this process of conceptualisation because they established a connection between individuals, institutions and volunteer groups. On a micro-level, centres of

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<sup>35</sup> Ballantyne highlights that exchanges between individuals and institutions “moved freely across both modern nation-state boundaries and the analytical units (e.g. settler colonies vs. military-garrison colonies) that historians use to order their work, and played a fundamental role in the history of imperial knowledge production and the cultural lives of many individuals within the empire” (Ballantyne 2005a, 96).

<sup>36</sup> Benoit et al. 1992, 12; O’Keefe 1992, 79-90; Jackson and Jacobs 1992, 681-705.

knowledge production in the form of debating and literary societies confirm the analytical metaphor of “webs.” Morris, for example, illustrates that in nineteenth-century England: “the structure of the voluntary society network served and exploited local community and urban identities and at the same time moulded them into national identities” (Morris 1990, 414). In New Zealand, ideas circulated back and forth between members and societies in Dunedin, Christchurch and Auckland. Moreover, these societies participated in and contributed to an international information flow. They reinforced structural requirements that formalised public discourse and as a consequence, coalesced ideas of empire and home that rendered nationalist sentiment intelligible to the majority of the New Zealand society.

Sinclair argues that “for many New Zealanders ‘Home’ became a passion” that was mainly concerned with England (Sinclair 1986, 94). The idea was entangled in an almost impossible “complexity of New Zealand feelings about the Motherland, the Empire, or the British Commonwealth of Nations” (ibid.). Students employed exactly this array of ambiguous terminology. Staff and students at the colonial colleges repeatedly contemplated their perception of imperial politics. As early as 1890, Canterbury students asked whether “England is justified in resisting further advances being made by European nations in Africa” (MBL, *minute book*, 27 Sept. 1890); the result was a universal no. Empire, for the students, also described New Zealand’s aspirations in the South Pacific.<sup>37</sup> In 1894, Strachan at Otago sketched the future of the colony as the dominant nation in the southern hemisphere: “New Zealand has taken up the sceptre of empire; for it is already an empire in embryo. Around her, like sentinels, her colonies are standing” (Strachan 1894, 132). As a consequence, the dichotomy of colonizer and colony provided a frame of reference in the global network of the British Empire and served as a model for dominance for New Zealand in the South. Definitions

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<sup>37</sup> McIntyre 1992, 342; Sinclair 2000, 226-227, Belich 2001, 236-237.

of “home” as old and new were central to students’ attempts to position themselves. In 1902, former Canterbury students Alpers and Irvine pointed out that “the New Zealanders have so far remained more distinctly English than, perhaps, is the case in some of the larger colonies” (Alpers and Irvine 1902, 429). They regarded the particular New Zealand attitude as a result of the country’s natural size and believed that “all classes, whether immigrant or native-born, habitually speak of the United Kingdom as ‘Home’” (ibid.). Britain as a consequence, was redefined as “mother country,” “old world” or “old country”.

Boundaries between the terms, even though constantly shifting, preserved a core reference to the natural conditions of New Zealand and elsewhere. The Otago debating society prize essay of 1899 profoundly illustrated this point. The anonymous writer freely transgressed from one term to the other without actively questioning her use of terminology. In favourably comparing the climate of New Zealand with that of England, the author concluded that it “does not sufficiently differ from that of the Mother Country, to affect, in any considerable degree, the bodily or mental constitution of the colonists or their descendents” (Natural Conditions, 1899, 84). By contrast, the “estrangement from Nature” in the colony “must be trivial in comparison with the state of affairs in the large cities of the Old Country” (85). The author never impugned New Zealand’s affiliation to Britain but always utilised it to define the “home” as either kin to or alienated from Britain’s natural setting. “Old Country” became coterminous with unsuitable and alien. “Mother Country” delineated degrees of familiarity. Depending on argumentative convenience, the understanding of “home” was located somewhere between overseas’ European Britain and local South Pacific New Zealand.<sup>38</sup> The Boer

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<sup>38</sup> Understanding nature caused New Zealanders to engage in a process of identification – physically as well as intellectually. Nature provided a point of reference to mould, influence, protect or destroy environment. Ballantyne and Bennett suggest that nature, landscape and community remind “us that New Zealanders’ sense of place, their attachments to particular landscapes, and their sense of identity are created in a variety of geographic contexts, both ‘at home’ and overseas” (Ballantyne and Bennett 2005,

War reflected this ability to live in two worlds. It not only strengthened New Zealanders' ability to determine elements characteristic to their own country but at the same time entangled them in the exercise of their imperial loyalty. New Zealand's involvement in South Africa added a new quality to students' search for belonging and ideas about fellowship.

The significance of popular entertainment and physical exposure for the identification of "us" in the midst of the Boer War has been largely omitted from recent scholarship. Phillips briefly discusses the connection of the Boer War, a growing entertainment business and the rise of rugby in New Zealand culture. Daley points out that, in 1902, Eugene Sandow's show of muscle display took place in New Zealand in the midst of a controversy on the physical fitness of young New Zealanders to join the overseas war action.<sup>39</sup> National sentiment found an expression in the physical that was preferably exhibited in public performance. The New Zealand public during the war engaged in what Hobsbawm calls the use of "symbols and semi-ritual practices" in which crowds utilised flags, banners, music and ceremonies (Hobsbawm 1996, 12). These exercises of patriotism created grounds for identification for soldiers as well as those remaining in New Zealand.

Music was paramount in inspiring feelings of belonging among New Zealanders. In 1900, Arthur H. Norris the former secretary of the Dialectic Society welcomed the

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16). Dunlap describes how national sentiment was associated with nature in colonial circumstances: "National nature had been an obvious thing, a few visible or distinctive plants and animals or striking features of topography or climate. Now it was coming to encompass a wider range of creatures and to emphasize immediate experience" (Dunlap 1999, 218). Apart from the perspectives on land and nature that arose from an Arcadian vision of the colony, students in New Zealand used "nature" to capture degree of "home"/ "Home" (New Zealand / England). The idea of Arcadia is described in Mahar 2005 and Fairburn 1989, 29.

<sup>39</sup> Daley argues that Sandow, "international strongman and physical culture advocate," used concerns over the "quality" of New Zealand's population to set his "entertainment vehicle" in motion and gather public support. She maintains that Sandow's "show and his system of physical culture focused on how to change the body: the future and newness, not the past was important. The body could become modern if new technology and a scientific approach were taken" (Daley 2000, 241-2). After seven weeks, Sandow became a "household word ... that captured the complex interplay of modernity, leisure and consumerism" (256).

familiar tunes played by a military brass band in his war camp in South Africa.<sup>40</sup> The music complemented an already quiet day:

To-day is a perfect day, warm sun and a cool breeze. Close by are the white tents of the troops camped here – Marshall's Horse, 2<sup>nd</sup> M.I., and a foot regiment, whose band is playing at the present moment. It is the first brass band we have heard since we left Wellington, so you can imagine our delight. They have just finished playing a favourite hymn tune. ([Norris?] 1900, 19)

The military brass band combined familiarity with amusement infused with a touch of religious reverence.<sup>41</sup> Before the war, G. P. Howells described the element of music in the debating syllabus as a form of entertainment that unified listeners in a particular way: “sweet enchantress of the inner feelings and deep emotions of our breasts, long reign as an imperious queen within our halls; continue ever to transport us to Elysian fields of bliss, or bear us mid the din of war, the rattle of musketry, and the deep booming of cannon. Let us feel a martial enthusiasm pervade our bodies, till we fancy we are marching, while the lusty bugles sound, to a glorious victory” (Howells 1893, 135). As a consequence, for Norris, the experience of hearing a brass band in South Africa evoked feelings for home but likewise stimulated his sense of belonging; an attitude partly cultivated in the debating societies.

The Boer War experienced a variety of public entertainments that drew massive crowds and created an “us” sentiment among New Zealanders. On October 21st 1899,

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<sup>40</sup> Hight and Candy's register lists Norris as born in England. After a B.A. and M.A. in English and French he joined the Second Contingent as corporal during the Boer War. During his time at Canterbury he was the *Review's* editor in 1899 and 1900. In 1901, after his return from South Africa, he was ordained Deacon of Church of England and became a Priest in 1903. Between 1902 and 1923 he was Chaplain to the Forces and “active member of various War Societies” (Hight and Candy 1923, 221; *CCR*, June 1900, 30).

<sup>41</sup> Attractions like vaudeville shows, music halls, the Theatre Royal, the popular brass bands and art galleries provided people with opportunities for diversion (Wilson et al. 2005, 225-45, 249-252; Gibbons 1992, 316). Simpson regards “Opera was one of the most admired forms of colonial entertainment” (Simpson 1993, 62) and sees it as part of an Australasian entertainment industry. Moreover, Clarke illustrates that, for example, royal celebrations “held immense importance for contemporaries, and were among the most prominent and colourful events in nineteenth-century Otago” (Clarke 2002, 138). John Innes of Canterbury College, for example, divided his spare time equally between associations and clubs and occasional public events. As a young student he was not only a member of the dialectic society but also frequented meetings of the Philosophical Institute of Christchurch and the Young Men's Association. In 1882, he went several times to the International Exhibition in Christchurch (Innes CMDR, 13, 14, 32-33).



40,000 people were present when the first Boer War contingent left Wellington. Richard Seddon, Lord Ranfurly and John Blair (then mayor of Wellington) gave addresses to the enthusiastic and large crowd. Bands on steamers filled Wellington with patriotic music. When the third contingent was sent off from Christchurch 30,000 were present in Lyttelton and 15,000 in Hagley Park. Students at the University of Otago and members of the debating society immediately planned to form their own contingent the moment the war broke out and the government had ensured that New Zealanders would join the troops in South Africa. Richard Seddon secured Parliament's and public consent before New Zealand was formally called upon for reinforcement of the imperial troops.<sup>42</sup> In October 1899, the Dialectic Society had to postpone a particularly interesting debate because of "the rejoicings over the relief of Mafeking" (*CCR*, Oct. 1899, 14).<sup>43</sup> The same day, the college "contributed a squad of 40 students in cap and gown to the procession" in Christchurch (30). A year later, the *Dunedin Evening Post* announced for Wellington the release of moving pictures on the war action:

Mr. Montgomery's popular company will reopen at the Opera House this evening with the new cinematograph films that arrived by last week's Frisco mail ... Amongst the latest picture importations are films of Lord Roberts' entry into Pretoria, General French on the way to Kimberley (a particularly interesting film), H.M.S. Powerful's return to Portsmouth, bringing out wounded, Boers around Kimberley, and many other scenes of interest. The managers promise one of the best picture exhibitions yet placed before the Wellington public. (*Evening Post*, 6 Aug. 1900, 4)

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<sup>42</sup> Belich notices that "he was almost successful in getting New Zealand troops to South Africa ahead of those other settlement colonies, but was bilked by a few New South Welshmen who had cheated by starting from Britain" (Belich 2001, 79).

<sup>43</sup> 'Mafeking Night' became known as the end of the siege of the British by Boer troops at Mafeking. The siege had lasted 217 days (1899-1900) and when news of the British victory reached England, the streets in London and elsewhere exploded with nationalist sentiment. Subsequently the term 'to maffik' briefly came in use. (Holmes 2001, 530) Its fame lasted well into the twentieth century. In 1908, notably Baden-Powell, the hero of the siege, extended William Smith's Boys' Brigade idea, and formed the Boy Scout movement, using his reputation to promote the association. The Boy Scouts are today seen as a result of the late nineteenth-century rise of nationalist spirit and creation of societies. Morris maintains that "scouting wove together imperialism, the concern for national efficiency and the growing enthusiasm for the cleansing effects and moral regeneration of contact with the 'outdoors'." (Morris 1990, 423) Belich states that in New Zealand, the Boy Scouts were established the same year and became tremendously successful. By 1911 approximately 15,000 boys were members. (Belich 2001, 365)

The war spectacle was omnipresent in New Zealand and students actively participated. In Christchurch, Peace Day, on the second of June 1902 was marked by spontaneously assembled groups on Cathedral Square where members of the debating society and prominent townspeople gave speeches accompanied by music of the local brass band.<sup>44</sup> In the late nineteenth-century, music was increasingly utilised by the military to enhance public approval. MacKenzie shows that “military and other brass bands were increasingly used as entertainment in public parks, at civic ceremony, at the departure of ships and even in churches” (MacKenzie 1992, 13). The Boer War celebrations and ceremonies were part of an arsenal of public leisure activities that were firmly rooted in New Zealand’s public culture.

The approval extended by New Zealand’s students to the military spirit of the Boer War period had its origins much earlier. By the time the war broke out, the New Zealand public was already familiar with the depiction of military scenes in popular entertainment. It was based on not only an intellectual but also a very physical experience of warlike power. McNaughton’s description of New Zealand drama suggests that early shows frequently used war scenes (preferably placed in the period of the Land Wars between 1845-72 and with Maori performers) to amplify the sensational aspects of a play. One review of *Philo Maori, or New Zealand as it Is* (1870) observed critically that such massacres were “too recent a memory ... to be burlesqued” (McNaughton 1998, 324). War was not to be mocked instead it was regarded as a character-building experience that enhanced rather than diminished one’s personality. Phillips shows that in the 1870s and 1880s, volunteer corps were preoccupied with ceremonial display rather than actual military engagement. Parades and sham fights were among the more common forms of military public amusement in New Zealand. In 1877, the sham fight at Forbury supposedly attracted a crowd of 7,-8,000 spectators

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<sup>44</sup> Recollections of that day in “Peace Day” (1902).

(Phillips 1996, 138). Such a large attendance suggests that military entertainment was respectable for the majority of New Zealanders. Moreover, central virtues of the New Zealand soldier such as chivalry, pioneer spirit, modesty and hardiness that were initially taken to characterise New Zealanders' distinctive performance in the imperial forces overseas, later came to describe the best qualities of New Zealand rugby players.<sup>45</sup>

Students merged this exposure to military themes with their debating practice. In 1885, in response to Russia's attack on Afghanistan and expectations of an English-Russian war, students and professors at Canterbury College resolved to form a corps: "The University Rifles."<sup>46</sup> Support for this motion was strong and the responsible committee successfully secured the signatures of seventy students, many of them members of the debating society. In 1901, in the midst of the engagement in South Africa, the endeavour was proudly recalled: "Professor Hutton was elected captain, with Professor Haslam and Mr. F. G. Stedman as his lieutenants" (Ohinemuri 1901, 19). Students were so much in earnest that they sent an application for enrolment to the Defence Department. This however was declined. In 1884, the first *AUCC* stated that "the Senate will be prepared to consider applications from candidates for nomination to one Cadetship at the Royal Military College at Sandhurst" (*AUCC*, 1884, 82).<sup>47</sup> Students eligible had to be between seventeen and twenty-two years old to qualify for admission. The heightened interest in patriotism and military display among students

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<sup>45</sup> Phillips provides details on the connection of rugby and the South African War (Phillips 1996, 213-4; 151). Sport, especially cricket, tennis, rugby and cycling also rated highly among pastime activities. In his reminiscences, James Reeves Wilkinson favourably recalls his enthusiasm for cricket and bowls in his Christchurch student days (Wilkinson CMDR, 17). In 1900, Professor Scott gave a very well received public lecture to the members of the Dialectic Society on "The History of the Cycle" (1900).

<sup>46</sup> In 1885, Britain engaged in a war with Sudan. Contingents from Canada and Australia joined the British forces overseas and, for the first time, formed an imperial army. In 1885, John Ballance, Minister of Defence in New Zealand, was not in favour of sending colonial troops to Sudan even though New Zealanders throughout the country volunteered. McIntyre relates that later in 1885, "when Russia appeared to threaten Afghanistan, and Britain stood poised to resist, the Cabinet offered a battalion of a thousand men" (McIntyre 1992, 340).

<sup>47</sup> Also *AUCC*, 1887, 125-126; Sinclair 1983, 38.

was part of a general public phenomenon in New Zealand. In 1885, James Anthony Froude observed that “the patriotism of the colonists was inflammable as gunpowder” (qtd. in Sinclair 2000, 227). In 1887, the “Russian Question” was again discussed by the Dialectic Society in Christchurch to little or no avail. Beginning in 1889, topics focusing on the state of defence of the colony were occasionally addressed. That year, students in Auckland determined that the defences of the colony were both necessary and efficient. In 1897, in Christchurch they resolved that “the present system of NZ defences is wholly inadequate” (*CCR*, Oct. 1897, 35), and in 1902, they advanced arguments on the question whether “the present outburst of military spirit is detrimental to the best interest of the Empire” (*Debating Programme*, 5 June 1902). Between 1899 and 1901, students in Auckland agreed that military spirit endangered the commerce of the colony and that it most certainly exerted a bad influence on art.<sup>48</sup> In 1903, after the Boer War had concluded, the same students were convinced that war was in fact “elevating to mankind” (*SCUA, minute book*, 17 Feb. 1903). A result of this sentiment might have been the growing number of volunteers in the colony. Between 1897 and 1902, numbers in New Zealand increased from 5,000 to 18,000.<sup>49</sup> Clarke shows that in 1897, during the Queen Victoria’s diamond jubilee celebrations in Dunedin, “despite the cold wet weather ..., crowds gathered to watch a military procession. A large number of volunteers turned out, including several corps from the country districts” (Clarke 2002, 146). The following year, the Canterbury College Dialectic Society defended the Volunteer system on grounds of liberty and freedom of choice, leading to the motion “That some form of conscription is desirable throughout the British Dominions”. The motion was lost but a number of “‘gallant defenders’ [took] up the cudgels heartily on behalf of the Volunteer system” (*CCR*, Oct. 1898, 10). The

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<sup>48</sup> *SCUA, minute book*, 14 July 1899 (art), 6 June 1901 (commerce).

<sup>49</sup> Numbers quoted in Belich 2001, 79.

volunteer system enjoyed such widespread interest because it cultivated civil responsibilities, physically as well as mentally, in small groups of like-minded men.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the idea of military service was intrinsically related to the issue of civil duties and respectability. In 1894 and 1901, students at Otago University rejected the notion that civilised nations should disarm. Even though both debates were won by the negative their conduct was slightly different. In 1894, the debate was judged “very interesting” and described as the exchange of opposing ideas:

A very interesting discussion took place, in which the cost and absurdity of the present military system and the desire for disarmament on the part of the European nations themselves were urged on one side; and the dangers of disarmament and the difficulty of enforcing obedience to the awards of arbitration were emphasised on the other. ... The vote, which was taken at the close of the debate, resulted in the negative side being carried by 18 to 16, but many refrained from voting. (*OUR*, May 1894, 22)

In 1901, the question itself was felt to be almost redundant: “The result of the contest was a comparatively easy victory for the negative side. Notwithstanding the apparent onesidedness of the statement under debate [That Civilised Nations Should Disarm], the debate was unusually exciting and interesting” (*OUR*, August 1901, 80). Whereas in 1894 students still “discussed” the question; in 1901, they engaged in a “contest.” The author of the brief account of 1901 appeared to assume that the question, which was exactly the same in 1894, was later not at all likely to cause considerable controversy. The outcome confirmed his prediction. His surprise at the unexpected liveliness of the discussion mirrored the conviction that military power was a corollary of national strength, influence and even respectability, and in the midst of bellicose engagement not an issue to be disagreed upon.

Opposition to the war, like enthusiasm, employed metaphors of bodily engagement to call into question the superiority of the imperial soldier. The disapproving perspective on the war rarely entered the *Reviews*. Significantly, between 1889 and 1898, students

in their debates frequently regarded arbitration as a cure to combative action abroad.<sup>50</sup> When criticism was voiced, it called for a balanced view on the Boers and the individual soldier's experience. "Colonial" argued that he "did not intend for a moment to praise Johnny Boer" but insisted that "Englishmen, above all things, like to consider themselves sportsmen, and, therefore, let us give our foe his due, and not run him down because he has so sorely tried our vanity" (Colonial 1901, 23). Accounts from the front never questioned the soldiers' loyalty to New Zealand or the Empire. Even in the most critical accounts, regard for the Empire was constantly professed and rarely doubted. During the war, the *Review* published pieces of genuine battlefield experience. In 1900, one of the first and longest depictions of a soldier's engagement in South Africa was printed. In the diary-like article, the writer evokes the impression of a man in doubt: "As you know there has been a terrible amount of sickness during the wonderfully fine weather we have had during the last few months, and with the season of rain and fever upon us, one does not like to think of the future, if the war is still to drag on" ([Norris?] 1900, 16). Doubt manifested itself in the physical exposure to dreaded natural conditions and uncontrollable diseases. In hindsight, Robert Malcolm Laing (1865-1941), an esteemed biologist of his time and a sympathetic member of the Dialectic Society since 1882, still considered military ideology a physical phenomenon in New Zealand's culture that was spreading like a disease: "the wretched Boer has inflamed our militarist ardour, and, in one way and another, it has been maintained at fever heat since then" (qtd. in Crawford 2003, 210).<sup>51</sup> Laing's statement points towards a deep suspicion of public sentiment and popular belief. Students were concerned about public

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<sup>50</sup> Results of these debates were always in favour of arbitration: MBL, *minute book*, 24 Aug. 1889, *Programme* 1897; SCUA, *minute book*, 6 June 1890, 17 June 1897, 5 July 1898.

<sup>51</sup> In 1886, Laing became master at Christchurch Boy's High School (a position he held until his retirement) and an active member of the Canterbury branch of the New Zealand Institute. Even though his contributions to the Dialectic Society and Philosophical Institute suggest an interest in Spiritualism and Mesmerism, he devoted much of his time to the inquiry of New Zealand's marine algae which culminated in the well received *Plants of New Zealand* (1906). He opposed the compulsory military training scheme introduced in 1910 and published *Shall War* only a year later. The biographical information is based on H. H. A. 1943-44; Crawford 2003, 210.

opinion and their notion of fellowship and home depended on their trust in the reliability of the press.

Sinclair argues that the newspapers during the war stimulated national sentiment. Almost anticipating Anderson's arguments in *Imagined Communities*, Sinclair concludes that newspapers "enable us to sense – to feel that we *know* – what the other members of our community, quite unknown to us as individuals, are doing. ... We feel a fellowship" (Sinclair 1986, 138). The creation of "fellowship" through the press was by no means genuine during the war. Especially the rise of jingoism and New Journalism questioned rational norms of community. Krebs shows that the critical attitude towards jingoism originated from a deep suspicion of journalism's ability to create public truths: "Jingo journalists are a new breed during the Boer War, an important part of the style of New Journalism. Jingo did not mean patriotic – all major British dailies would have considered themselves patriotic, even the very few who opposed the war. Jingo was, rather, a class-inflected concept. The jingo journalist, with screaming headlines and rah-rah attitude, was the press equivalent of the music hall song-and-dance act" (Krebs 1999, 10). In fact, students were aware of the disturbing influences of journalism on general public opinion. Beginning in 1888, students discussed the ambiguous role of the press each year, always deciding in favour of its freedom (SCUA, *minute book*, 6 July 1888, 7 June 1889, 13 April 1891, 8 Jan 1903; MBL, *minute book*, 8 Oct. 1892). As a consequence, students' idea of fellowship began to hinge upon questions of the reliability and truthfulness of the readership. In 1901, Colonial commented on the fickleness of public opinion in the colony:

We ourselves, filled with the idea that the Colonial Contingent was rather good, composed as it was of amateurs, perhaps overlook the fact that even we enlightened New Zealanders may also have made a few mistakes, and may have had a few of our delusions swept away. We may overlook the fact that we shared in the common mistake of supposing that the war was to be over in six months; ... and that our First Contingent was merely going away for a picnic. (Colonial 1901, 21)

The same author continued to lament that a “good man has practically to face popular disfavour because the public had let their patriotism and popular sympathy override their average good discernment;” and this not only because initially information came “from Home,” that is, England; but “when we come to matters pertaining more closely to ourselves, it is questionable whether our judgement was any the more accurate” (ibid.). Colonial saw himself as part of the corrupted mass of New Zealanders. The same year, another contributor to the *Canterbury College Review* under the suggestive name of “Pax” observed that “public feeling seems to have reversed engines in fickle parts of the colony” (Pax 1901, 15). In adopting the role of soldier-just-come-home, the author positioned himself outside the sphere of a misinformed readership. He distanced himself from the people at home who believed “screaming headlines” while abandoning first-hand proven information from their “pals” stationed overseas (14). The idea of fellowship and the location of a feeling of “us” were obscured by the corruption of truth.

Before the war, Strachan and Howell in Dunedin did not have any difficulties in defining fellowship with reference to New Zealand as a nation with a particular landscape and “richness of natural beauty” (Howell 1893, 133). For Strachan a rising sense of “us” was nourished by war, battle, New Zealand’s countryside and the myth of the dying race: “patriotism grows; and, to the patriot, the booming surges become sweet melody; the snow-capped mountains, pregnant with inspiration; and the forest robes of the hills whisper the romance of Maori traditions” (Strachan 1894, 130). The South African war, anticipated by Strachan as a means to confirm national identity and notions of fellowship, questioned the rational foundation of this version of patriotism. Among debaters, fellowship and mutual respect were required virtues, prescribed by societies’ constitutions. During the war, these imposed values were undermined by suspicions about the supposedly reliable and respected role of the press. During the war, students were also able to publicly perform their sense of fellowship in a forum that was



sensitised to the display of community spirit and national sentiment. Consequently, students' notion of fellowship was brought into a sphere of physical engagement that tightened their bonds. On the one hand, the need to identify subversive forms of information flows, created a bond among students that set them apart from the Other, the mass. On the other, debate no longer remained confined to the academic sphere with well-circumscribed norms of rational interaction. The Boer War took part of students' rhetorical action out on the streets in the form of public celebrations. While these events provided an opportunity to venture out of the college, they also further separated the academic sphere from the urban public forum.

## **Conclusion**

The "inter" in nineteenth-century New Zealand debating practice consists in a notion of fellowship that is entwined with ideas of home, rationality, reliability, Empire, and rational recreation. Habermas conceptualised the function of mutual rationality on the basis of symbol use in spoken language as the normative rationale for human social interaction. Debating practice in late-Victorian New Zealand functioned as an "intervening horizon" between the realities of the *lifeworld* and the normatively confined realms of education. Students moulded debating programmes to accommodate aspects of rational recreation and leisure. During the Boer War years, the significance of fellowship changed as a consequence of a heightened suspicion about the reliability of public opinion and the corrupting force of spectacle. New Zealanders, mostly inspired by Britain, were harnessed to the adventure of imperialism and nationalism. Students at once negotiated a distinctly New Zealand perspective as well as a larger imperial outlook on the occurrences overseas. The fusion of these apparently very distinct attitudes into one was made possible only by the set of discursive patterns already in place at the outbreak of war.

Students debaters in New Zealand shared a common physical space at their respective colleges that was conducive to creating a sense of belonging. The fortnightly Saturday meetings aimed at “ennobling ourselves and elevating mankind” (Howell 1893, 132). To realise these objectives students had to define what “mankind” entailed. In other words, debaters had to clarify whether “mankind” remained a regulative ideal or whether their activities should be placed in a non-academic context. Wittenberg observes that “being part of a public – being *in* public – is potentially always a being-out-after-curfew” (Wittenberg 2002, 430).<sup>52</sup> During the formative years of the debating societies, students revised the form of their mission to “elevate mankind” and redefined the way they would present themselves “*in* public.”

The tentative notion of fellowship represented only the first stage in the transformation of debate in New Zealand. The Boer War helped to consolidate as well as challenge notions of belonging but it likewise propelled New Zealand debaters onto the next stage of contemplating the meaning of *esprit de corps*. The notion of fellowship that surfaced during the formative years of New Zealand debating societies and in the period prior to the South African War was imagined in the regulative boundaries of academic education and intellectual enlightenment. Debating, even though a legal and political form of deliberative discourse, was used as a means of communication among students to create an “us” feeling. Its political aspects hardly surfaced and were merely present in the prevalence of the topics that were discussed. During the war, the political validity of issues changed. The physical and often public exposure of debaters added to an already present sense of civil responsibility. Habermas’s idea of *lifeworld* and system

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<sup>52</sup> Wittenberg in his article reviews Michael Warner’s *Public and Counterpublics*, which draws on Habermas’s definition of the public sphere. Warner defends a highly discursive understanding of the public that assigns regulatory force only to discourse itself. Wittenberg grounds Warner’s approach in bringing in the concrete aspect of physical participation that enables the individual to actually be in public. Wittenberg does not intend to provide an analytical tool for historical analysis. Instead, his criticism points out an important component of late-Victorian New Zealand public life and rhetorical culture, that is, the increasingly (often intentionally) physical exposure of the individual to an audience. The physical, emotional and the intellectual coalesced in New Zealand debating.

provides a mechanical framework in explaining discursive interaction. Debate in the Boer War years became a discursive means used to negotiate what Laclau terms the “constitutive outside”.<sup>53</sup>

For Laclau, political and structural changes in society are determined by the hegemony and contingency of circumstances and conceptualisation of the real. Laclau argues that there is always a necessary “undecidability inscribed in structure” because something outside of the paradigm constantly challenges the validity of the system (Laclau 1996, 89). In other words, when Colonial and Pax learnt through wartime experience that external influences on the colony did not necessarily imply constant betterment, they simply experienced the surfacing of constantly shifting norms. For Strachan in 1894, these norms were still intact. When he maintained that New Zealand’s future as a colonial power would be determined through its “relation to circumstances” (Strachan 1894, 101), he assumed that the influence of the outside was pushing New Zealand in the direction of nationhood, progress and continual improvement. The “constitutive outside” in the form of the Boer War did not yet exert its influence on New Zealand’s public. When it finally did, various discourses tried “to fill the structural gap” (Laclau 1996, 93). Students, as a consequence, re-interpreted fellowship in the context of debate. In view of shifting norms of discursive reliability, in particular with regard to the press, fellowship began to be described in terms of conduct and conformity to rules. Incidents of physical interaction likewise became the object of criticism. The individual, who Brown praised as the responsible secluded scholar, was increasingly controlled by the binding norm of the “group”. The concept of *esprit de corps* was the

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<sup>53</sup> Laclau 1988, 1996, 2000; Laclau and Mouffe 1987. Laclau’s proposed construct of a political system as an “open system” admittedly constitutes logical problems but it remains a useful metaphor for understanding discursive dynamics in situations of political and cultural upheaval (Laclau 1996, 92-94). Laclau argues that a political system is never stable because an unknown outside force will always undermine the objectives of that system. I use Laclau’s concept as a metaphor for nineteenth-century debate. The Boer War presented such a constitutive outside that challenged existing norms of debate.

result of tendencies to control discourse. As a consequence, collegiate debating societies gradually lost their function as cells of knowledge production.

## Chapter Three

### How to Close a Debate: Consensus, Conflict and *Esprit de Corps*

#### Introduction

In defining the vices and virtues of debate, ancient and modern scholars have continually emphasised the element of political participation and consensus formation, which have lent debate its high status in democratically organised communities. Habermas in the twentieth century elucidates this well-established significance of consensus for democratic discourse by locating a dynamics of consensus formation in the three-fold structure of subjective, objective and social world. In Habermas's model, debate as an element of democratic discourse shares this analytical framework. As an alternative to Habermas, Jon Elster analyses political debate on the basis of the tripartite relation of argument, bargaining and voting. Both models are crucial in coming to terms with the implications of nineteenth-century consensus formation in debate.

New Zealand students during the formative years of their societies promoted the ideas of fellowship and fair discourse. Their procedures were influenced by the parliamentary handbooks of Britain and New Zealand. Voting, the central form of determining consensus in debate was highly formalised and depended on the authority of the chairman. Towards the end of the century, forms of bargaining in debating situations became spontaneous and daring; voting processes were undermined by disruptive behaviour. As a consequence, strict norms of discursive conduct were enforced in order to control debate. The rise of *esprit de corps* was the result of this trend.

The emergence of debating contests emphasised pivotal aspects of *esprit de corps*. Moreover, in a colonial context, the founding of tournaments represents a transformed and invented tradition to incorporate notions of "us". A strong sense of competition

surfaced in the discourse surrounding the establishment of tournaments. Competition was meant to be a mirror of the social realities of the students and thus a crucial element of their education. The cultivation of competition had long-term consequences for the exercise of debate. The audience, for example, was disenfranchised and voting was no longer practised. Bargaining likewise lost its ground in the increasingly formalised procedures of debating contests.

This chapter first examines the implications of Habermas's ideal notion of consensus. Elster's model provides the framework for an initial analysis of the voting practice of New Zealand societies. Voting and bargaining are set into the context of a maturing notion of *esprit de corps* in the colony. Eventually the practice of debating contests is discussed in greater detail to fully comprehend the significance of the transition from fellowship to *esprit de corps*.

### **The Power of Consensus in Debate**

Nineteenth-century debaters in New Zealand preferred consensus formation by final ballot and bargaining. Discussion of this routine was influenced by the social context of debate, that is, by paradigms of moral, normative and political discourse, private as well as public. All three paradigms are mutually entwined and cannot be understood independently of each other. Consensus formation has always been subject to questions of truth and moral virtue with a particular focus on the authenticity of agreed-upon propositions. Furthermore, the majority principle with its norms of conduct has been and still is the target of suspicions about the feasibility of consensus in general.<sup>1</sup> As a

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<sup>1</sup> Recent scholarship in political theory, in particular Gundersen (2000), Kahane (1999) and Bickford (1996), questions the idea of consensus and promotes learning as the pivotal aspect of debate. Consensus is discredited because of its regulative nature, that is, its tendency to discourage change and diversity on grounds of a majority-minority vote. In other words, objectors to consensus-theory (and Habermas in particular) defend a revisionary concept of deliberation that favours learning over mutual agreement. This perspective on the function of consensus is based on a general distrust in majority-determined truths that rely on audience choice. Instead, the favourable view on education is characterised by a faith in the unremitting nature of human discourse.

consequence, a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of nineteenth-century debate in New Zealand hinges upon two constituents and their educative implications: the final ballot and bargaining. Habermas arrives at the concept of argumentation, bargaining and voting through a careful elaboration of the tradition of deliberation starting with the Sophist v. Plato. The Introduction showed that debate in New Zealand is regarded as a means that teaches the individual to act as a responsible citizen. This reputation partly originates from the perception that debate trains people in argumentation and voting behaviour. Protagoras, credited with the invention of antithetical deliberation, also explicitly ascribed a social relevance to debate by amalgamating debate, Athenian education and the notion of the good citizen. Protagoras thought that the Athenian education system aimed at “teaching the art of being a good citizen” (Sihvola 1989, 89). In other words, education was regarded as the cradle of civic responsibility.<sup>2</sup> By creating a sphere of application, debate under Protagoras infuses its social setting with formal rules of conduct and notions of political and moral virtue.

Protagorean debate with its binary model of discussion (the defence of two contrary views) was immediately criticised for its competitive nature:<sup>3</sup> “Young men, when they first get a taste of disputation, misuse it as a form of sport, always employing it contentiously, and imitating confuters, confute others. They delight like puppies in pulling about and tearing with words all who approach them” (Plato *Republic* 499b). The phrase “seeking victory in argument” captures the essence of Plato’s and Socrates’ disapproval. They did not welcome pursuit of public argumentation for the sake of

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<sup>2</sup> Schiappa defends this interpretation and maintains that “for Protagoras, *logos* was the means through which citizens deliberated and came to collective judgements. Protagoras contributed to the theoretical defence of consensual decision-making, and he may have been the first to provide rules to facilitate the orderly conduct of debate and discussion” (Schiappa 1991, 199).

<sup>3</sup> Plato’s views on Protagoras’ teachings are best displayed in his *Protagoras* and *Theaetetus*. However, Plato mingles his own views with Socrates’ interpretation and scholars of Greek philosophy commonly acknowledge that Plato “was certainly an artist writing dramatic philosophical fiction and not a historian of ideas in his portrayals of Sophists and other opponents of Socrates” (Sihvola 1989, 81).

triumph on stage; they rejected it as an inappropriate standard for civil engagement. Instead, the wise citizen aspired to the realm of ideas, which should also find its expression in reason and argumentation, that is, preferably in dialectic. In 1884 in New Zealand, Professor Haslam shared Plato's sentiment when making students at Canterbury College familiar with the Sophists: "[I]n their desire to *persuade* they lost their touch of the art of *convincing* men. They called in the emotions in their aid, and no longer appealed to reason alone. They neglected to develop the positive side of Dialectic, and applied themselves to the cultivation of Rhetoric" (Haslam 1884, 10). Haslam, by invoking Plato's writings, relied on human faith in reason and consensus rather than competition in bringing about understanding (24). Suspicion of emotional appeal in rhetorical deliberation was a common element in nineteenth-century New Zealand debating practice. Plato, moreover, conveyed the impression that procedural patterns of discourse were to be preferred to forms aiming at singular results in the form of rhetorical victory. Aristotle likewise associated the Sophists' method of disputation with motives of publicity and financial gain. He regarded both orientations as undesirable for political deliberation.

Greek philosophy established the traditional dichotomy of consensus versus conflict with its spectrum of moral, normative and political implications. Admittedly, Plato imposed regulative ideals on moral and political conduct and despised rhetoric for its ambiguous values, while Aristotle relied on the theoretical force of ethics. Protagoras favoured practical access to general knowledge without restricting its application in life to any specific moral framework (Sihvola 1989, 130). Despite the considerable differences of Protagoras, Plato, Socrates and Aristotle, they shared ideas of civic duty and education that transcended apparent divisions. They agreed, for example, that civic



virtue and social equilibrium are realised only within an educated public, a vision that resonates in modern argumentation theory.<sup>4</sup>

In contemporary theory, consensus is defined as the confirmation or rejection of a set of norms, propositions or opinions, which are legitimised by mutual agreement or the majority vote. Indeed, rhetorical theory knows three types of consensus: theoretical consensus (on truth), practical consensus (on correctness), and pragma-dialogic consensus, which commonly deals with theories of consensual contracts. The majority principle either based on reason and validity (for theoretical and practical consensus) or on interests (in the case of pragma-dialogic consensus) is the common backdrop for all three approaches. The contemplation of antithetical viewpoints is rooted in “collaborative” argumentation that combines a moral, normative and political reading of consensus for rhetoric.<sup>5</sup> The three forms of rhetorical consensus constantly communicate the social dimension of the individual-audience relation and of constructs like community and public.

The dichotomy of emotion and reason proves crucial to the discussion of consensus formation in social settings. Students in late-Victorian New Zealand were frequently confronted with “sentimental” and scientific arguments. During a debate on the advantages of cremation, “arguments from science and fact were well brought out; on the other, the sentimental aspect was strongly presented” (*OUR*, June 1901, 39). Chaim Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca in *The New Rhetoric* pursue a revisionary approach to Aristotle’s writings and the binary opposition of emotion and reason (Perelman and

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<sup>4</sup> In contemporary rhetorical studies, the conspicuous reputation of Sophists has been critically revised. Dietz calls for a revision of sophist methods that would place their work in closer proximity to Aristotle and Plato without sustaining the traditional division (Dietz 1992, 1414). Kastely also favourably reviews the Socratic tradition with a particular reference of post-modernity (Kastely 1997). Moreover, Derrida in “Plato’s Pharmacy” points towards the propinquity of technique between that of the Sophists and Socratic dialogue in Plato. As such, he places the Sophist discourse within a post-modern context. Sophists as well as Socratic dialogue depend on the capacity to adopt contrary points of view and both share a distrust of writing over memory (Derrida 1983). I am grateful to Huw Griffiths for bringing this last point to my attention.

<sup>5</sup> Böhler and Rähme provide a detailed discussion of the theoretical framework and origins of consensus theories (Böhler and Rähme 1992, 1256-1265).

Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969).<sup>6</sup> Perelman continues the project in *The New Rhetoric and the Humanities* and argues that people are capable of following argumentation precisely because they are willing to accept certain premises that render speech valuable to listeners (Perelman 1979). The combination of reason and emotion is central to Perelman's work. He maintains that forensic and deliberative discourses examine the subject of debate based on reason; epideictic discourse contemplates the integrity of the speaker and thereby solicits sympathy from the audience:<sup>7</sup>

Yet it can be maintained ... that the epideictic genre is not only important but essential from an educational point of view, since it too has an effective and distinctive part to play – that, namely, of bringing about a consensus in the minds of the audience regarding the values that are celebrated in the speech. (Perelman 1979, 6)

Consensus, for Perelman, gives rise to and is based on values which a specific body of people identifies as emotionally as well as rationally acceptable. He advances rhetorical thinking because he acknowledges the significance of emotions for consensus formation. Perelman thus reinvigorates Protagoras' insistence on the relevance of emotional persuasion.

Elster has recently applied Habermas's concept of socially embedded consensus formation and Perelman's integration of emotion to his interpretation of deliberative argumentation in a democratic context (Elster 1998a, 1998b).<sup>8</sup> He shows that in

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<sup>6</sup> The origins of this approach are noticeable in Perelman (1963).

<sup>7</sup> The distinction of deliberative, forensic and epideictic discourse is also taken from Aristotle's argument in *On Rhetoric*, where he differentiates between these forms. For Aristotle the audience mostly determines the type of speech that is given. "If the audience plays the role of judge, the orator presented is either forensic or deliberative. It is forensic if the issues in focus arise from the past and deliberative if they involve the future. ... In epideictic discourse the audience plays the role of spectator or observer rather than judge" (Enos 1996, 228f).

<sup>8</sup> Elster is not alone in his attempt to develop a theoretical approach to deliberative democracy and rhetorical tools. Gunderson aims at a similar goal and emphasises the educational nature of deliberative discourse. Crosswhite focuses on the understanding of the social and political significance of argument and choice and the function of empathy in this process. Farrell (1993) follows in Habermas's footsteps and derives from his work political implications that endorse rational deliberative discourse. Black investigates the relation of shared social knowledge and political systems and likewise subscribes to rational argumentation as democratic means. Elster thus writes in a critical tradition that focuses on deciphering the innate mechanisms of deliberative discourse and eventual consensus formation. Perelman in the 1970s and Elster in the 1990s also acknowledge the critical potential and significance of

deliberative democracy, discourse is essentially constructed through the triple-formation of argumentation, bargaining and voting. An undecided assembly striving for agreement will return to these three principles to resume contemplation and eventually arrive at consensus. Elster's ideas are conducive to an understanding of nineteenth-century debating because they combine procedural as well as spontaneous elements in an analysis of consensus-driven discourse. He maintains that the choice of using argumentation, bargaining and voting depends on the motives of those who partake in discussion. In other words, the course of deliberation is saturated by passions, reasons and interests of those who claim the stump (Elster 1998a, 6). The concept of bargaining is the most elusive and probably the most revealing aspect of his theory. Elster states that bargaining is characterised by an intricate exchange of "offers and counteroffers" which are governed by "the resources that enable them to make credible threats and promises" (ibid.). Bargaining features prominently in debate because it marks the transition from the initial stages of posing an argument to the final results of voting. Elster's understanding of political deliberation emphasises a distinctly strategic process of consensus formation. He is interested in political dynamics beyond the level of formal impartiality (Elster 1998b, 101-104). In other words, Elster enhances Habermas's concept of formally regulated argumentation and acknowledges, for example, the possibility that "passion and prejudice, too, may dress themselves up as reason" (103).<sup>9</sup> Nineteenth-century debating was characterised by an assemblage of opinion-building exercises in which forms of bargaining diverted argumentation from its ideal course.

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Habermas's ideas (Perelman 1979, 89). Habermas, too, recognises Perelman's work in connection with Toulmin's *Uses of Argument*. (Habermas 1984, 50).

<sup>9</sup> With a focus on voters and audience, Elster develops categories of constraint that determine the intelligibility of public discourse. He discusses the function of consistency constraints, imperfection constraints and plausibility constraints that potentially undermine the credibility of a political statement if the self-interest of a speaker does not correspond to the ideal general interest of the public (Elster 1998b, 104-105). Accordingly, Elster adopts the Habermasian ideal of "the force of the better argument" in order to demonstrate the dynamics of discursive interaction in the political arena.

Habermas's fundamental principle of consensus is grounded in an ideal understanding of rational acceptance of the other and the normative function of truth (Habermas 2001, 83). Burleson and Kline assert that in his early writings, Habermas creates an atmosphere of consensus that is prevalent in his subsequent work: "That is, the possibility of routine communication is dependent on the implicit reciprocal imputation by social actors that the other is intelligible, truthful, sincere, and behaving according to appropriate social norms. Such assumptions, when fulfilled, form what Habermas calls a "background consensus" (Burleson and Kline 1979, 417). According to Habermas's idea of communicative reality, social norms do not have to be accepted through a formal contract. Instead, Habermas in *TCA* combines theoretical with practical consensus.<sup>10</sup> Owen points towards Habermas's synthesis and supports his universal approach.<sup>11</sup> Habermas relies on the normative and structuring force of reason to bring about a consensus on truth and correctness that is universal and binding. Because, in this model, reason generates a practical as well as a theoretical consensus, the results of a Habermasian mutual understanding have a bearing on the actual social reality of participants.

Habermas favours rational consensus formation whilst being aware that realised, empirical consensus in the unreliable medium of language is unlikely to permeate every aspect of his ideal setting. He identifies fundamental social elements that best incorporate his regulative ideal: the fundamental possibility of disagreement, a Kantian-like emphasis on the wellbeing of the other, the binding force of the majority and the inclusion of civic responsibility. This process of inculcating civic responsibility through

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<sup>10</sup> In Habermas's work the difference is made clear by means of the German terms *Wahrheit* (truth) and *Richtigkeit* (correctness).

<sup>11</sup> Owen maintains that "it is important to distinguish rational consensus from merely de facto agreements. The idealizing presuppositions of speech function as just this sort of criterion. To the extent that any actual, empirical consensus is reached in accordance with the idealizing presuppositions of speech (that is, the rules of discourse), it is rational. And insofar as any given consensus is rational, its products are true or right" (Owen 2002, 49). Like Elster, he points out the Habermas's ideal version of consensus does have an application in a social context because it reveals other forms of agreement that merely pose as consensus.

an acceptance of the possibility of contradictory arguments was already crucial to features of nineteenth-century New Zealand debate. So, in 1883, von Haast paraphrased the combination of education, civic participation and responsibility for the students at Canterbury College and reinvigorated the Greeks' connection of education and citizenship:

On leaving school, the future citizen ought to know his duty towards mankind. He should feel that by participating in the blessings of civilisation he has to live up to the state of general culture surrounding him, and to assist in advancing it to the best of his abilities. In one word, there should never exist a contrast between life and school. (Haast 1883, 6)

Von Haast's statement was exemplary for the generally liberal or humanistic perception of education. Even though, by the end of the century, New Zealand professors demonstrated a more practically oriented utilitarian notion of academic instruction, the objective of civic participation permeated ideas on how public consensus was to be understood.<sup>12</sup>

Deliberative bargaining, for Habermas, is fundamentally grounded in the possibility of discursive disagreement and the human ability to criticise. Consensus is made possible because individuals first disagree on both the theoretical as well as the practical level of a given state of affairs. Moreover, they relate their subsequent choices to their social context(s) and are able to learn in the process of deliberation. Habermas conceptualises consensus as the final agreement that crosses a yes-no divide through informed and rational dialectical discourse and, at the same time, negotiates the social background of the participants. From his point of view, the interlocutor arbitrates two extremes of a conundrum to eventually decide, after an exhaustive process of

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<sup>12</sup> E.L. Brown, member of the Dunedin debating society and winner of the essay competition, contemplated the use of higher education and divided the answers into "the humanistic and the utilitarian, or the liberal and the commercial" (Brown 1898, 100). In the subsequent issue of the *OUR*, Professor Gilray published his assessment of the society's prize essays and argued that "the majority of the essayists take too utilitarian a view of education and fail to distinguish clearly between the function of Arts education and professional education" (Gilray 1898, 130). Between 1878 and 1902, the issue of liberal and utilitarian education was continually discussed among students in New Zealand (Hocken, *minute books*, 25 June 1880; MBL, *minute book*, 17 April 1880, 10 April 1886, 13 April 1889, *CCR*, June 1898, 11; SCUA, *minute book*, 12 Aug. 1887, 19 Aug. 1891, 29 April 1901).

contemplation, in favour of one of the options. The final result of this painstaking procedure is mutually shared because reciprocal education and emancipation and the binding effect of social circumstances allow for only one possible outcome.

Habermas's consensus draws on the mandatory force of the majority. The individual (very much in the Enlightenment tradition) contemplates the logic of opposing positions in the midst of the individual-community dichotomy and is accordingly embedded in a complex of social relations. Habermas's understanding of consensus at once confirms and is in need of the collaborative characteristics of argumentation. He formulates a notion of consensus that draws on the Greek dialectical method and its emphasis on mutual agreement among members of an audience. Habermas foregoes regulation by external judges or any competitive element because he believes that individuals are fully capable of generating liberal consensus without external interference. In a political context, Habermas and Perelman share the belief that every individual in possession of her rational capacities can enter into discourse and contribute to the final vote in the best interests of the community.

Finally, Habermas stresses that the social norms of dialectical discourse are dictated by reason. He maintains that although "the actual course of the debates deviates from the ideal procedure of deliberative politics ..., presuppositions of rational discourse have a steering effect on the course of the debates" (Habermas 1996, 540). His argument leads to the conclusion that public awareness of consensus is an outcome and regulative norm of the practice of debate. By being practised, debates fuel the actual application of rational consensus. Habermas's faith in human deliberation is therefore distinctly optimistic, a quality he shares with Protagoras. Both philosophers place rational truth at the centre of democratic models and at the discursive culture that underlines them. Both further conclude that human progress is inseparably linked to the universal application of reason.

Sihvola later supported by Schiappa concludes that Protagoras' theory is the nearest equivalent to a conception of historical progress and human betterment in ancient Greece (Schiappa 1991, 199). Habermas also defended an argument of historical evolution.<sup>13</sup> New Zealand nineteenth-century debaters heard a similar review of the essentials of human historical conduct.<sup>14</sup> In 1884, Professor Haslam foresaw "the establishment of a rule of conduct for man that shall not be stereotyped; but shall have in it a principle of progress, and a principle of quiet growth" (Haslam 1884, 33). He envisaged a political system that "will need no periodic convulsions in the shape of reformation, revolution, or repentance" (ibid.). Haslam observed that even though upheaval purified a society, it inevitably left it blemished. He placed complete trust in the progressive force of reason and a universal principle of "right and wrong" and that these are essentially "historical developments in obedience to certain laws" (34).

Debating societies at the end of the nineteenth century merged these facets of consensus formation when adjourning the meeting. This chapter shows that arguments, sentiments or even misconduct and bad behaviour characterised the continuum of how consensus was created through argumentation, bargaining and the final vote.

Nineteenth-century debaters in the protected environment of their clubs combined the force of public moral consensus and saw their final agreement as a practical means to terminate discussion, that is, as a formalised procedure that would lead their discourse to a tangible result. Towards the end of the century, they began to externalise voting in

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<sup>13</sup> Habermas's idea of progress is welded onto a defence of the evolutionary emergence of rationality. He describes the dominance of reason as the transformation of human thinking from mystic belief in superstitions to logical analysis of the environment (Habermas 1979; 1984, 262-298; Owen (2002) for a critical analysis of Habermas's idea of historical progress).

<sup>14</sup> Professor Haslam in his lecture to the Dialectic Society quoted the Professor of Moral Philosophy at King's College: "However form may be our persuasion of the divinely-guided progress of our race, the fact of a general forward movement in the steam of history is not inconsistent with all sorts of eddies and retardations at particular points; and before we can be sure that such points are not to be found in our own age, we must have some knowledge of the past development of thought, and have taken the trouble to compare our own ways of thinking and acting with those that have prevailed in other epochs of humanity" (Haslam 1884, 5-6). Haslam illustrated that the idea of historical progress was based on a revisionist attitude of the past. The revisionist project fundamentally consisted in the identification of "eddies and retardations" in previous eras and the avoidance of them in the present.

debating competitions and assigned the task to judges, who were not part of the society. This removed arguments from their normative value and correctness because it divided the function of arguer and judge and separated debaters from the interactive processes of consensus formation. Socrates saw that the practice of debate might lead to the externalisation of judgement and consensus formation:

We might answer Thrasyarchus' case in a set speech of our own, drawing up a corresponding list of the advantages of justice; he would then have the right to reply, and we should make our final rejoinder; but after that we should have to count up and measure the advantages on each list, and we should need a jury to decide between us. Whereas if we go on as before, each securing the agreement of the other side, we can combine the functions of advocate and judge. (Plato *Republic* 348 a-b)

Habermas wants to preserve the synthesis of advocate and critic in the individual to create a responsible public being. The core attribute of rationality and a competent interlocutor, from Habermas's point of view, is that rational propositions can be contemplated and challenged.

In the nineteenth century, final voting as the expression of consensus in collegiate debate was well-established. The process imitated parliamentary procedures. I argue in the remainder of the chapter that voting in students' debate paralleled trends towards formalisation in politics. With the introduction of debating competitions, voting was cut off from its political roots and a new tradition that integrated procedures of show was established. Consensus formation and education as goals of nineteenth-century collegiate debating slowly disintegrated and debating in general lost its societal relevance. In the nineteenth-century debating sphere, the phrase *esprit de corps* acquired a specific meaning that mirrored this process. Previously embedded in the undifferentiated sphere of rhetoric and oratory, competitive deliberation established a new category for debate, which distanced debate from the moral, normative and political paradigms of participants. Argumentation, bargaining and voting no longer created a sense of belonging. Voting remained a part of the culture and procedure within



the societies, but disappeared from intercollegiate sessions. Nineteenth-century debate relinquished its focus on bargaining and voting. Eventually, debate became a formalised spectacle rather than an arena for critical contemplation.

### **Processes of Consensus Formation: Argumentation, Bargaining, and Voting**

Passion for truth manifested itself in the deeds of students and the structural framework they created around them. Debating societies combined a rule-abiding routine with detailed constitutions and standing orders that ensured proper deliberative procedure. Every new member had to sign the constitution, thus, accepting its catalogue of rules. Nineteenth-century constitutions of debating societies reveal that requirements for reaching consensus were meant to be strict and static. On the one hand, students aimed at adhering to an ideal of consensus that was influenced by the Victorian zeitgeist marked by public responsibility and forms of political participation. On the other, debating practice in student circles transcended this ideal by mocking democratic rituals such as parliamentary deliberation and by questioning the routine of franchise.

In 1895, Rev. Bates in his lecture *On Democracy* formulated this ideal of a well-informed and progressive New Zealand public capable of reaching universally applicable decisions:

[T]he community at large becomes a kind of parliament. Political topics and measures are discussed and criticized from a hundred points of view. The spread of education and consequent enlightenment of the people, tending as it does to equalise social conditions, is also a contributor force in the same direction. Acted on by all these agencies, the civilised world itself seems to be in process of unification. (Bates 1895, 106)

This ideal suffered various violations in actual debating situations. Students resisted attempts at unification. As a consequence, the element of spontaneity in debate was checked by rules meant to bring the regulative ideal closer to its realisation.<sup>15</sup> Attempts

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<sup>15</sup> I understand spontaneity as a part of creativity that materialises in sudden emotional outburst, physical and intellectual expression. Brown understood the term as purely intellectual spirit: "He [the scholar] knows that the past of the world is based on the spirit of man, and that it needs but the spirit of man to

to counterbalance the creative moment in debating, however, resulted in the neglect of central social dynamics of consensus formation. Debating societies' efforts to formalise structures eventually led to the externalisation of evaluation and to the gradual disappearance of forms of participatory consensus.

Debating societies in New Zealand gradually accepted the final vote as the most conspicuous and tactile manifestation of consensus. The Dialectic Society began to enforce the idea in its year of founding. Otago waited until 1881, when it adopted the practice.<sup>16</sup> For students at Auckland University the final vote was an integral part of their practice. Voting took place by counting raised hands. Members could but did not have to explain their opinions. Standing orders and constitutions suggest that the societies' chairmen were pivotal to administering discursive procedures. In the booklet of 1899, the chairman had the right to decide "all questions of order not herein provided for;" the debate was to be suspended until the chairman had resolved situations of disorderly conduct; s/he had further to decide whether or not the audience should vote on the time allowed every speaker, in case a speech was to extend twenty minutes (MBL, *Standing Orders*, 1899, 4). The chairman could invite friends of the society to take part in the discussion.<sup>17</sup> *Speakers' Rulings*, the New Zealand manual for parliamentary debate, forbade members to "read comments by persons outside" and urged them to "deliver their own opinions on the subject of debate" (*Speakers' Rulings* 1898, 104:231). Like parliament, debating societies relied on the authority of the chairman to accept non-members' active participation. S/he also oversaw the

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make it live again; and he gives the spirit in him full play – the spontaneity of his nature" (Brown 1881, 18).

<sup>16</sup> The minute book simply mentions that "Mr. Hodge then gave notice of the following motion: 'that a vote be taken at the close of each debate'" (MBL, *minute book*, 24 June 1881). Unfortunately, the record does not give any reason for this introduction.

<sup>17</sup> Every member of the Dialectic Society could bring friends to the fortnightly meetings. However, friends could not vote but were allowed to join in, in which case the chairman had to give her permission. The minute book of the Dunedin society states "that members may bring their friends, but that non-members be not expected to take part in the proceedings, unless invited to do so by the chairman" (Hocken, *minute book*, 14 June 1878).

administration and presided over resolutions relating to the business of the society. The most important aspect of the mantle of chairman was his casting vote:

9. A question being put shall be resolved in the affirmative or in the negative by the majority of voices, or, on a division being called for, by a show of hands. The Chairman shall have a deliberative as well as a casting vote.

10. The Chairman shall state whether in his opinion the “Ayes” or the “Noes” have it. Unless a division shall be called for, the Chairman’s decision shall be final. (MBL, *Standing Orders*, 1899, 3)

Depending on the circumstances, the chairman obtained the right to overrule an entire meeting in order to secure an unambiguous outcome of the discussion. The audience, according to the rules, was urged to reach a majority of votes to retain the power of decision.

Subscribing to the principle of majority and granting the chairman a casting vote replicated parliamentary procedure. In 1886, Alpers at a meeting of the Dialectic Society moved that “that the Committee draw up a set of rules to regulate the debates of this society – such rules to be founded on May’s book on Parliamentary Procedure and that the committee submit these rules to the society for consideration” (MBL, *minute book*, 1 May 1886). Alpers referred to May’s *Treatise*, the common handbook for parliamentary procedure in Britain. For students in New Zealand, *Speakers’ Rulings* and May’s *Treatise* provided precise rules for the regulations on a speaker’s casting vote that were adopted for collegiate debating procedures. S/he could tip the balance either “in favour of advancing a Bill a stage further” or “so that the existing state of things shall continue” (ibid., 1900, 111:297). Atkinson relates the case of the Motueka Petition of 1871, when the one of the candidates had to be “declared elected on the casting vote of the returning officer” in parliament because the popular vote resulted in a draw (Atkinson 2003, 56). Political norms provided a frame of reference to students in New Zealand to draft rules for their proceedings.

The final vote in nineteenth-century debating, besides being influenced by parliamentary protocols, was determined by the simply reality of time. Evenings were normally two hours long, although on rare occasions the audience agreed to extend the duration of the argument. More frequently, discussions were brought to an end by vote when members began to leave the room. If students were not able to come to a conclusion, the duties of the chairman extended to the closing of debate and to reporting the outcome. Occasionally, the rule that a result had to be obtained at the end of a debate caused undesired extremes. At an Otago parliamentary debate in 1900, it was felt that the chairman corrupted the discussion:

Not satisfied that the Opposition candidate had had the immense advantage of the 'last word,' he [the chairman] proposed a vote of thanks and proceeded at once to take a poll; thus blocking all chance of questioning and criticism to which the candidate had laid himself so open, and which had been freely given to the opponents of the other two candidates. Such conduct, excellent in strategy though it be, is highly reprehensible and cannot be excused on the plea which was given, of the lateness of the hour. (*OUR*, Sep. 1900, 93)

This was one of the rare occasions when the chairman was openly censured for his manipulation of the proceedings. The incident highlighted that nineteenth-century debaters had to acquiesce to worldly circumstances like the porter's demands for sleep, the painful absence of any heating device in winter, or the biased conduct of a chairman. Habermas's ideal supposition that mutual agreement follows orderly rational and potentially unconstrained discussion did not apply to nineteenth-century debating conditions. In 1882, members of the Dialectic Society in Christchurch simply resolved to terminate the debate on "What are Metaphysics?" due to the late hour; they had already argued for three hours. Debaters in Auckland were more practically inclined and accepted that members might have to leave prior to reaching agreement. In 1888, the society carried the motion "that members leaving the meeting before its close, and after 9 o'clock, be allowed to leave their proxies" (*SCUA, minute book*, 8 Sept. 1888). This

certainly secured the ballot but also corrupted the discussion because the force of the better argument was relinquished in favour of the routine exercise of vote taking.

The final counting of the “ayes” and the “nays” was an adopted parliamentary instrument and reflected a long tradition of inclusion in volunteer societies.<sup>18</sup> At Canterbury College, the already mentioned “Chichelian Senate” was deliberately established with a parliamentary structure to create “a more orderly method” in which “sharp skirmishes of wit and argument might be cultivated” (*CCR*, Oct. 1898, 38). The routine of final ballot as part of this “orderly method” was well established in New Zealand debating societies in subsequent years. Stalemate situations were highly undesirable and were made almost impossible by the sanctioned intervention of the chairman. There is only one recorded incident from any of the three collegiate debating societies when “opinion was equally divided” (*OUR*, Aug. 1891, 150).<sup>19</sup> Unlike the idea of rationality or leisure, the concept of consensus registered by a final vote was never conceived as problematical. The final ballot was a formalised traditional constituent of debaters’ practice with roots in parliamentary proceedings.

Actual accounts suggest that individual members did form opinions on propositions despite the regulations that merely aimed at counting the votes. Students’ assessment usually targeted argumentative as well as emotional tactics of persuasion and conviction. In 1901, the Otago University debating society decided in the negative when considering “whether the efforts of the Commissioners on the Medical School had been

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<sup>18</sup> Morris traces back the proliferation and growing significance of volunteer associations in Britain to the years following 1780. “A whole new series of words came into common use in the English language, often changing or adding their meaning – the association, the society, the chairman, the agenda, the membership, the rules and constitution and the annual report” (Morris 1990, 395). He further explains how voting was perceived: “The characteristic institutional form of this network of voluntary societies was the subscriber democracy. Money was collected from members. The funds were distributed and activities organised by a committee and officers elected by the subscribers at the annual general meeting. One subscription, one vote was the general rule and uncontested elections the normal practice” (412). In 1903, the Auckland debating society included the “one subscription, one vote” concept in its constitution. Members were only allowed to vote if they had paid their subscription (*SCUA, minute book*, 7 May 1903).

<sup>19</sup> The discussion dealt with the significance of Latin for the acquisition of the B.A. degree.

abortive” (*OUR*, Sep. 1901, 99). The *Otago University Review* maintained that “we think the decision in this case was quite justified by the arguments” (*OUR*, Sep. 1901, 100). At the turn of the century in Christchurch, Mr. East “was unable to prove to the satisfaction of the Society that the capital city of a State should not be represented by Parliament” (*CCR*, Oct. 1900, 12). Proceedings of the debating society published in the college *Reviews*, on a regular basis, called for more knowledge and reason and hence more reliable arguments: “Our meetings would be much improved if some of the members of the ‘Back Seat Gang’ would not so far forget themselves as to interrupt the speakers; moreover, some of the speakers would do better if they put less pretended wit and more sensible reasoning into their speeches” (*CCR*, June 1902, 16). In 1901, the secretary of the Otago University debating society hoped that the society on this occasion would decide that modern civilisation was a failure based “on the merits of the arguments brought forth by the respective sides” (*OUR*, Sept. 1901, 138). He further suggested that if the audience voted on grounds of the presented arguments, then—even though “things are in a very sad plight”—the society’s standpoint was acceptable for the moment and reversible at a later stage (*ibid.*).

Comments on argumentative merit were not detrimental to the process of final voting. Much more frequent were unfavourable allusions to the emotional or even sentimental involvement of the audience and, as a consequence, the alteration of debate’s outcome. It was noted that the audience was biased towards certain propositions, as happened in the case of the topic “that the tendency of modern inventions is to induce an inclination to physical inactivity.” Not wholly unexpectedly, the discussion turned towards the advantages of the bicycle. The *Canterbury College Review* noticed that “after a glance at the bicycle shed, however, an observer would not be surprised that the motion was lost” (*CCR*, Oct. 1897, 34). The same year, the debate on New Zealand’s inadequate defences was somewhat sidetracked but eventually

carried when the “gallant defenders” present made it a more local and personal event and “the broad basis on which the mover rested his argument was thrown into the background” (35).

In 1898, the involvement of women in debates revealed an interesting facet of formalised norms of consensus formation. In Dunedin, students held a debate on the question “was America justified in intervening in the Cuban dispute, apart from the *Maine* incident?”<sup>20</sup> Miss Randle, at the last moment, decided to join the opposition:

Speaker followed speaker rapidly, and the interest never flagged, though the ‘House’ sat till an unusually late hour. The voting resulted in a majority for the affirmative. When the ‘ayes’ were called for, nearly all the men held up their hands, but very few of the ladies. The negative were in high spirits – the ladies were, of course, going to support Miss Randle. But, alas for those who place reliance on the ways of the uncontrollable sex – whose conduct obeys no known laws, and the secret of whose nature has yet to be discovered – when the ‘nays’ were called for only one or two of the ladies voted. (*OUR*, June 1898, 50)

The author assumed that the women present would side with Miss Randle, the one female student who got up and faced the audience. Particularly in Dunedin, debates were held with either entirely male or female participation. The occasion when a woman teamed up with fellow male students was expected to cause other women to sympathise with Miss Randle. The author expected to detect a supposedly sentimental element in their women’s voting behaviour. Atkinson identifies a similar idea in the discourse that led to women’s suffrage. He argues that “men supported suffrage for a variety of reason” and among those was “an expedient calculation that female voters would favour their particular faction or causes” (*OUR*, June 1898, 86). In 1891, the issue of women’s suffrage in the public arena circled around the question how women would vote if they had the right (90).<sup>21</sup> Nothing of the sort came to pass. The article showed that by 1898

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<sup>20</sup> Canterbury held a similar debate, only in April, and by chance four hours after the United States had declared war (MBL, *minute book*, 16 April 1898).

<sup>21</sup> Atkinson shows that, between 1891 and 1893 considerations of women’s electoral behaviour were central to parliamentary debates on the issue. (Atkinson 2003, 90-94). He quotes Sir John Hall who argued that “suffrage would ‘be a great gain for us’, as it would ‘increase the influence of the settler and family man, as against the loafing single man who held a great voice in the last elections’” (90). The

the regulative force of emotion was commonly accepted as a probative force for arguments. In particular, the social aspect of bargaining acquired considerable meaning for the expression of personal preferences and companionship.

Contemporary debating manuals for parliamentary use also had something to say on the issue of social or personal bias. Luther S. Cushing, author of one of the oldest and most influential debating manuals in America, stated that interlocutors should refrain from referring to any particular member by name and, instead, address people by their function or simply address them with “the previous speaker.” Cushing also provided good reasons for this procedure: personal feelings, dislike, disturbances and most importantly sympathy were to be avoided in order to ensure the orderly running of debate (Cushing 1851, 61, §206). In 1895, Mackenzie in his lecture on debating style in New Zealand alluded to the same concern when he argued that “anything approaching to vulgar and offensive personalities are, of course, to be avoided” (Mackenzie 1895, 138). In 1903, the Auckland University magazine *Marte Nostro* pointed out that debaters were not abiding by the rules: “Another general fault is the habit of mentioning the names of previous speakers when referring to their arguments” (*MN*, Oct. 1903, 8). Students’ behaviour in deliberation was opposed to what Cushing and Mackenzie identified as the predominant style of American and English political discourse and what debaters aimed at enforcing in New Zealand.

Towards the end of the century, the subversion of rules acquired a physical element beyond the reference to personalities. In 1898, debaters in Dunedin contemplated whether the colonials were paying too much attention to sport.

A vote having been taken, the chairman declared the ‘ayes’ victorious by one vote. The decision was, however, challenged, and the negatives claimed a majority of five. Some enthusiastic sportsmen, however, held up two hands and a walking stick – sheer physical inability prevented them holding up more. If the counting was inaccurate, the voters are probably to blame, and the chairman

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observations of the student debater in 1898 were embedded in a political discourse that asked similar questions and generated almost identical answers.



naively remarked that as some of them were wearing gloves he could hardly be expected to see their hands. (*OUR*, June 1898, 50)

Emotions overwhelmed some debaters. More striking was the complete unreliability of the final counting, which stood in clear contrast to traditional procedure. The scene reverberated with an eagerness that parallels a session in Christchurch eighteen years earlier: “At the close of the concert three cheers were given for the Professors for their share in the brilliant success of the college at the hands of the London Examiners” (*MBL, minute book*, 12 June 1880). In 1895, the *Otago Review* mocked the ingenious method of a prominent debater of drawing attention:

The correct thing now is to stride across the intervening desks, even though you are the possessor of a weak ankle. Fashion is inexorable. Having made a bow of the wooden-doll order, gracefully gather the books in your arms, gather yourself together for a leap of three feet on to the front desk, and return to the bosom of your admiring friends by the before-mentioned ‘desk route.’ (*OUR*, Sep. 1895, 113)

These expressions of partisan spirit for fellow debaters fell into the register of bargaining in deliberation. At the end of the century, hardly anyone took amiss the application of passionate behaviour to a presumably sincere occasion. The account of 1898 is written in a sympathetic and bemused rather than a reproachful tone. In the 1880s and early 1890s, the minute books of the three societies are void of accounts of disturbances. In those years, Rev. Thomas Flavell expressed one truly grave concern in 1882, when he lamented the lax punctuality among members (*MBL, minute book*, 2 Sept. 1882). Towards the turn of the century, the filing of more serious interferences increased and so did critical comments on social conduct and formal protocol. Minor emotional outbursts that stood in contrast to the regulative ideal of rational discourse were, however, increasingly accepted at the same time.

The Otago University and the Canterbury College *Reviews* regularly betrayed the true nature of debates. In 1894, in Dunedin a participant remarked: “Why don’t the witty interjectors of funny remarks at the debating society get on their feet and allow

their victims a chance of throwing remarks at them?” (*OUR*, Sep. 1894, 112). In 1896, an anonymous critic was ready to order “a fire hose as part of the equipment of the Honorary Secretary of the debating society” (*OUR*, June 1896, 42). Debating societies began to tighten their hold on discipline when the “populus” was increasingly hard to control. The force of convention ceased to be effective and had to be replaced by a detailed set of norms in order to regulate or even exclude bonding strategies, exclamations of team spirit or plain larrikinism. Contrary to Habermas’s assumption that reasonable discourse provided the normative grounds for structured discussion, debating societies at the end of the nineteenth century faced a different reality. Debates increasingly consisted in articulations of what Elster terms “credible threats and promises” (Elster 1998a, 6). In other words, students used alternative bargaining strategies that did not draw on reason and norms to persuade the audience but employed colloquialisms, emotional appeal and physical presence to reach spectators. In order to balance this trend, those in charge of the organisation of debate enforced structure and social norms to guarantee a rational and well-regulated discussion.

Records prove that stricter social convention did not lead to clearer decisions. On the contrary, the numerical outcome was occasionally replenished by additional commentary. As was customary procedure, meetings were adjourned after the final vote had been taken. At Otago University Dr. Colquhoun, who served as chairman for the evening, seized the opportunity to comment on the subject of “cremation or interment” and “at the close of the debate ... kindly consented to give some remarks on the subject” (*OUR*, June 1901, 39).<sup>22</sup> In 1894 in Dunedin, Alfred Richard Barclay acted as chairman for the debate: “Is the Social Life of Our University Satisfactory?”<sup>23</sup> The audience was almost unanimously of the opinion that it was not. “At the same time it was admitted by

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<sup>22</sup> Daniel Colquhoun was Lecturer in the Practice of Medicine at Otago University (Morrell 1969, 62).

<sup>23</sup> Alfred R. Barclay had been on the debating committee since 1878 and in 1881, became the society’s vice-president for the first time.

all that the social spirit of the University was greatly increasing – a fact to which the chairman himself an old student, said he could bear testimony” (*OUR*, Aug. 1894, 52). At Canterbury, on the topic of technical education in New Zealand state schools “everyone seemed to agree as to the desirability of technical education, but all could not agree to its introduction into state schools” (*CCR*, Oct. 1898, 10). In Auckland, students decided to complement their initial resolution “that the power at present possessed by the Press should not be curtailed” with “that it would be undesirable and dangerous for the Press to have absolute power” (*SCUA, minute book*, 7 June 1889). The need to add comment to the final ballot shows that the counting of ayes and nays did not suffice to express the society’s choice. In particular, the chairman seized the opportunity to expound his or her personal views. Other even more detailed accounts imply that the significance of closing a debate was more complex than formal procedures suggested.

On the fiercely disputed questions of woman joining the medical profession, the verdict certainly did not indicate closure. In 1885, students in Dunedin discussed this question and resolved it in the affirmative. It was one of the rare occasions when the debate was extended over two evenings. In 1891, closing the debate on the same topic only demanded one night but then, the final decision became slightly noncommittal:

On a vote being taken, it was found that a majority were in favour of admitting women to the medical profession; but a second division – the result of a suggestion by Mr. Sidey – proved conclusively that the prospect of having lady medical students at the University is not viewed with much favour by the majority of students. (*OUR*, Aug. 1891, 87)

Another source stated that admission of women should “be postponed till the system of the Medical School was remodelled” (*OUR*, Comm. Issue, 1893, 41). These two reports were to a certain extent inconsistent. In the first instance, students opposed even the possibility of female enrolment; in the second reading, the audience rejected the notion only on grounds of the structural problems that the Medical School was experiencing. The discrepancy demonstrates that the final ballot was far from expressing the

members' complex perspectives. It merely served as a benchmark for their diverse views.

The outcome of debate was still significant, but it is doubtful whether the mere figures had any effect on the society other than providing room for the simple recording of results. Nineteenth-century debating societies employed voting as one constantly undermined expression of their consent. Their practice was increasingly characterised by a dynamics of bargaining in order to mould the society's opinion. It was this tendency that eventually revealed the spontaneous aspects of consensus formation and that allowed for the corruption of strict written patterns of voting. These socially pertinent elements were gradually formalised and assimilated when a new tradition arose: debating tournaments. The idea of *esprit de corps* appropriated the social connotations of bargaining and proved conducive to the establishing of debating contests.

### ***Esprit de Corps* and the Emergence of an Invented Tradition in New Zealand**

To determine the particular influences that contributed to consensus formation in nineteenth-century New Zealand debate, I explore the invention of a new tradition at the end of the century, the debating tournament and the corresponding systematic transformation of *esprit de corps*. Hobsbawm observes that the creation of new traditions "is essentially a process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past, if only by imposing repetition" (Hobsbawm 1996, 4). Hobsbawm expects the invention of traditions to take place "more frequently when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social pattern for which 'old' traditions had been designed" (ibid.). New Zealand debate fused "old" traditions originating from England or America and "new" colonial ones. Students in New Zealand occasionally articulated the assumption that the relatively limited range of old

traditions furthered these transitory processes. In 1899, the winner of the prize essay was convinced that “vested interests and unquestioned traditions do not here offer such serious obstacles to the progress of so-called ‘Liberalism’ as they do in older countries” (Natural Conditions, 1899, 113). Consensus in debating was formalised to extinction by a heightened sense of individualism and the conviction that new tradition should fill the vacuum of late-Victorian New Zealand discursive culture. The same motivations provided a justification for abandoning the audience’s active role in decision-making processes in debate. The introduction of inter-collegiate debating tournaments in New Zealand denotes what Hobsbawm termed “invented tradition” (Hobsbawm 1996, 4). It came with the entire paraphernalia of late-Victorian colonial spirit.

New Zealand debaters were conscious of the colony’s lack of tradition and of a national past. Towards the end of the century, they eventually embraced an alternative proactive position that focused on the active creation of traditions. James Hay’s statement of 1887 was perhaps the most pertinent for an earlier cautious yet not less optimistic view:

It is an easy thing, and perhaps more pleasant, to be born in good traditions than to be at the making of them. But it is a circumstance inseparable from the conditions of a young colony’s existence that its traditions belong to its future and not to its past, that the character of its institutions shall be according to the condition in which we have received them. And in this lies the greatness of our responsibility. (Hay 1887, 1)

In 1894, Alexander Wilson in analysing the Georgian novelists in his opening lecture rather melancholically pointed out that “one of the privileges denied to us, expatriated colonists, is association with a venerable past – the privilege of sitting occasionally in the midst of ruins” (Wilson 1894, 43). The same year, the Otago student D.A. Strachan regarded the absence of ruins as an undeniable advantage for the future prospect of New Zealand. In building on the traditions of Britain, New Zealanders would forge their own history and future: “[W]e have the story of our motherland to recall until we show one

of our own” (Strachan 1894, 129). After the formative years of the societies, students began to locate their roots in New Zealand. For one student at Canterbury College the beginnings of the debating tradition coincided with the activities of the Chichelian Senate. He recalled the members of the club with much reverence and assumed that “their hearts will ever lie buried with the past”.<sup>24</sup> In 1894, Cane was confident that Britain’s past provided a point of orientation for the young intellectual elite of New Zealand: “The genius of the people that has given to the world so many poets and thinkers cannot be dead. Per chance with a new century and new generation of men that genius will rise again Phoenix-like from the ashes of a past time” (Cane, manuscript 1894, MBL, 27). The future of New Zealand depended on a new generation of young colonials who strove to produce genuine colonial traditions that transcended their English heritage. Collegiate debating societies with their youthful enthusiasm provided an environment conducive to the invention of colonial traditions.

*Esprit de corps* is the term that emerges from the archival sources and epitomised efforts made to consolidate old and new ideologies that were permeated by national sentiment and feelings of fellowship. Originally a military expression, by the mid-nineteenth century, *esprit de corps* denoted a “regard entertained by the members of a body for the honour and interests of the body as a whole, and of each other as belonging to it” (*OED*, s.v. “esprit de corps”). By the end of the century, the term was evidently in wide use and equally severely attacked in New Zealand as well as on the European continent. In New Zealand *esprit de corps* was immediately associated with education and debating. In 1879, Professor Sale in Dunedin “said that students should learn to love their *alma mater*, and cultivate *esprit de corps*” (*OW*, 31 May 1879, 17). In the middle of the Boer War, a short letter entitled “Esprit de Corps” reached the editor of

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<sup>24</sup> The entire quote reads: “Though the good wishes of all early senators always follow the Senate’s progress, their hearts will ever lie buried with the past. A new king arises who knows not Joseph, and be the present debates more profound and eloquent that they were of yore the memories of that dozen or so pioneers will ever lie in happy cluster around the spot known as Study No. 2” (*CCR*, Oct. 1898, 40).

the *Canterbury College Review*. The author called for more enthusiasm among the male students of the college: “They are regular nonentities, they have no personality” (*CCR*, Oct. 1901, 41). The idea of *esprit de corps* enjoyed a wide application in New Zealand, but it was also in common use in Europe.

In 1899, George Palante (1862-1925), a French professor of philosophy inspired by socialist ideas, published a comprehensive and severely critical essay: “*Esprit de Corps*”.<sup>25</sup> Palante distinguished between two senses of the term: a narrow meaning which referred to the solidarity of a professional group and a broader sense that “designate[d] the spirit of solidarity in general, not only in the professional group, but in all those social circles, whatever they might be (class, caste, sect, etc.), in which the individual feels himself to be more or less subordinated to the interests of the collectivity” (Palante, Palante Archives, 1). In the latter understanding, Palante held the liberal educated professions responsible for forming *esprit de corps* co-operations. He identified core aspects of the social phenomenon: intellectual and moral conformism, rivalry and competition, the cultivation of superiority, the control of private and public formal conduct and expansion of influence into the wider public. In addition to these negative attributes Palante issued further reprimands. *Esprit de corps* suppressed innovation and talent in individuals and instead was interested in “perfectly disciplined beings” (7). Behaviour in accordance with the demands of a co-operation was “sometimes decorated with character” (6).

Palante’s essay invokes the impression that *esprit de corps* was an elitist, conformist, competitive and fundamentally middle-class phenomenon that corrupts

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<sup>25</sup> George Palante was recently discovered by scholars of nineteenth-century European culture and history of ideas. In 2004, his complete works were published. The defence of the individual against the corrupting forces of the modern society constituted the central theme of his teachings. Even though nineteenth-century students in New Zealand possibly never heard of Palante, his article identified cultural implications of *esprit de corps* that set into perspective New Zealanders’ use of it. Onfray provides a concise summary of Palante’s work in Palante (2004). The essay originally appeared in *La Revue Philosophique* in 1899 and was reprinted in Palante (2004). A careful English translation is available on the internet under [www.marxists.org/archive/palante/1899/esprit-de-corps.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/palante/1899/esprit-de-corps.htm) in the online Palante Archives and will be quoted forthwith.

basic social principles of humanity and solidarity. In contrast, Palante admitted that individual members of societies and clubs possibly acted out of conviction and in “good faith” (Palante, Palante Archives, 7). He nevertheless emphasised the detrimental social effect of *esprit de corps*, which was mistaken by some (he cited Durkheim and Dromer) for the mediator between state and individual and as such, for a regulative force which guided the individual in his social reality. Palante strongly disagreed and argued that “the individual cannot ask from a corporate group his law and his moral criteria” (9).<sup>26</sup> Palante endorsed the proposition that an individual should be allowed to contribute to numerous causes at the same time:

The individual, while he is in a certain sense a tissue of general properties, can be regarded as the point of interference of a more or less considerable number of social circles whose moral influences reverberate within him. The individual is a harmonious and living monad whose vital and harmonious law is to maintain himself in a state of equilibrium in the midst of a system of interfering social forces. (11)

He thus granted the individual the innate capacity to manage the multi-faceted challenges of social existence. In other words, he entitled a person to be fully responsible for her social conduct and entirely independent of externally imposed standards. Palante’s critical version of *esprit de corps* anticipated the twentieth-century suspicion of the dominance of the Victorian intellectual elite for the determination of universal social standards.

The application of ritualised practices like consensus formation or poll taking in debate to a New Zealand nineteenth-century cultural context has been largely neglected and has not yet been connected to critical studies of the invention of tradition. Atkinson investigates New Zealand’s electoral system from a historical point of view but does not reflect on elements of political practice that were ritualised constituents of New

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<sup>26</sup> Palante argued: “In our eyes the value of the individual’s moral activity is in direct relationship with the freedom of which he disposes. The corporate group dominates the individual through interests too immediate and too material for this liberty not to be hindered. It can, in fact, suppress the means of existence for an individual refractory to its moral discipline” (Palante, Palante Archives, 9).



Zealand's franchise system in the nineteenth century (Atkinson 2003). Leslie Lipson and Raewyn Dalziel contribute to the understanding of the vote as a historical concept in New Zealand culture but remain confined to a linear historical perspective (Lipson 1948, Dalziel 1989).

Palante's analysis highlights every aspect of Hobsbawm's invented tradition. *Esprit de corps* amalgamated formalised elements, aspects of ritual and references to the past, which aimed at incorporating a regulative sense of belonging. In the early 1880s, New Zealanders were not yet using the phrase in the context that Palante targeted in his essay. Instead, the exclusionary quality of the term slowly surfaced at the turn of the century. In 1882, Professor Cook, for example, coupled it with rather positive connotations of "social life" and "friendly spirit" when relating his experience of student life at Cambridge.<sup>27</sup> James Hay, in 1887, likewise endowed the term with an overall positive sentiment of "tradition" when he foresaw the lasting existence of the College's debating society:

I congratulate you upon your success in having kept up the efficiency and the *esprit de corps* of this Society, which has now survived the first seven years of its infancy, and I hope that by the time it attains its twenty-first year it will have acquired traditions which will secure its existence as long as the college lasts, that is will have sent forth men into the world who will have made their mark in the various departments of life in which they shall have engaged, and who will at all times be proud to have been connected with this college. (Hay 1887, 1)

In 1888, the *Otago University Review* was launched. The editorial ended with an entire section on the state of *esprit de corps* among the student body. The author pointed out that "our students, it must be confessed, are sadly lacking in *esprit de corps*" and assumed that "of the social life that forms so great a part of the educational value of the Home universities they have no idea" (qtd. in Jones & Southgate 1972, 8). Moreover,

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<sup>27</sup> Cook maintained: "Now I am far from thinking that a University should convert itself into fashionable lounge, but I do think that these young idlers derive a great deal of good from residence at the University, good which is not represented by the book learning which they acquire, and that, in return, they contribute very much to the social life of the place and to the *esprit de corps* of the whole body of students" (Cook 1882, 20).

the editor expressed the wish that the *Review* would add to the spirit already initiated by the debating society and the football club (ibid.). The sentiment that was prominent in Hay's address and the Otago *Review*'s editorial extended beyond the boundaries of Canterbury College and acquired a slightly more proactive tone in Hawkes Bay. In 1896, William Colenso the then president of the local branch of the Philosophical Institute called on the *esprit de corps* of his members to sustain the work of the society. He did not miss the opportunity to invoke a sense of competition among the different branches of the institute:

Our society is both smaller and poorer than other kindred ones in this North Island. ... We here in Hawke's Bay must feel it, and therefore it is more imperative upon us, as a determined and devoted though small band, devoid of those large blessings which our elder sisters enjoy – in rich endowments, princely gifts, resident learnt scientific men, extensive libraries and museums – to be active, to be penetrated with that genuine *esprit de corps* which not infrequently more than makes up for the want of everything else. (Colenso 1896, 131)

At the dawn of the twentieth century, the phrase *esprit de corps* touched on a range of New Zealand sensibilities that collided to form a sense of belonging that was pivotal to the zeitgeist of the colony.

Formalised practices like poll taking and the exercise of bargaining strategies in debate united individuals on grounds of common or social knowledge; they also divided them. This was Palante's central criticism of *esprit de corps*. In 1883, Professor von Haast in Christchurch observed the same phenomenon. He recalled the early career of the German scholar Paracelsus and defended his method of teaching in German instead of Latin: "It can easily be imagined how deeply his colleagues were shocked by his want of *esprit de corps*, and what a howl of pious indignation was raised against him, for using such a vulgar tongue as the German language, spoken by the common people" (Haast 1883, 4). Von Haast made clear, like Palante, that insistence on common

procedures for the sake of preserving an outdated pattern of belonging, had hindered German education in previous centuries.

Contemporary scholarship provides numerous historical instances of the same ambiguous dynamics of formalised political and social engagement. Mares shows that debates on correct forms of protest caused dissent and tension among radicals in 1870s Britain instead of providing an opportunity to identify common grounds (Mares 2006). Morris observes that British clubs and societies “by the end of the eighteenth century were spreading into the countryside where some of them lasted well into the twentieth century often providing a focus for community, identity and ritual” (Morris 1990, 399). Ray invokes equivocal interpretations of ritual and debate in nineteenth-century America when she dissects the confined pattern of lyceum debating not as a “ritual of discussion or compromise seeking” but rather as a “ritual based on a cooperative framework” (Ray 2005, 28). She holds that debating did not foster compromise but simply formalised final voting processes by adhering to established strategies. As a consequence, she acknowledges the power of formalisation to acquaint individuals with certain procedures but points out the possibility that these procedures were not inevitably conducive to the creation of social knowledge and shared meaning.

Decisions in debating societies in New Zealand were based on written norms and governed by processes of reshaping these regulations lending them a flexible quality. The opinion-building constituent of debate was initially subverted in an attempt to create what nineteenth-century debaters termed *esprit de corps*. Some students predominantly criticised the physical expressions of this form of group identification as disruptive behaviour. Bargaining, the pivotal element in the New Zealand debating style of the 1880s and 1890s, is characterised by spontaneous outbursts of passion, appeals to reason and the interest in fellow members. In other words, bargaining falls partly into the category of rhetoric that Plato criticised for its interest in mere victory and Aristotle

rejected as financially motivated publicity. Bargaining cannot be circumscribed by written guidelines. It instead provides the ideal point of departure for any attempt to mould and influence the dynamics of consensus formation. Obstreperous occurrences became part of a distinctively collegiate way of debating. By the end of the century, no report went by without commenting on students' irritating behaviour. It is ironic that this nonconformist conduct at once articulated a maturing sense of partisanship and paved the way for a concept of belonging that negated the irregularities of students' behaviour. The latter even further imposed principles of conformity by coupling these with moral and normative values like character, responsibility and care for the other. Loyalty of each member to the cause of the society characterised the late nineteenth-century version of debating societies in New Zealand.

Criticism of these occasions demonstrated that they became indispensable to the continuation of debating at New Zealand colleges, however annoyingly they were portrayed. The contentious issue of academic dress contained the entire range of arguments on old and invented traditions. In 1899, for example, an ominous "Observer" noticed that the Dialectic Society held a prominent place among students for its disregard of etiquette and academic tradition:

I would like to draw your attention to the habit which seems to be growing upon students of late years, namely, that of not wearing cap and gown within the precincts of the College. ... The laxity referred to is very noticeable at meetings of the Dialectic, numbers of students even speaking there without gowns on. (*CCR*, June 1899, 40)

Despite this palpable tendency to go against university custom, the question of collegiate attire was debated five times. Otago University students always rejected the idea of compulsory academic dress; Auckland instead defended the concept. G. P. Howell at Otago chose the issue as a typical example of a "well argued and keenly contested" debate that showed "signs of honest feeling, of deep principle, of love of freedom, and of desire for patriotism" (Howell 1893, 134). The discussion was also

“illuminated by spirited allusion, sarcasm, and intermittent humour” (ibid.).<sup>28</sup> In fact, customs like academic dress codes served as grounds of identification for students’ debating spirit. Howell significantly concluded that if gowns would “inflict pain upon sensitive natures” it would “be better to sacrifice personal appearance and the dignity of the awe-inspiring mortar board, than injure the feelings of a fellow-student, for care for the feelings of others is a mark of true *esprit de corps*” (ibid.). Howell was the first student who employed *esprit de corps* as an argument in its own right. Previous lectures and essays exclusively utilised the term as a metaphor for the formidable progress of the debating societies. In Howell’s essay, the concept, on the contrary, provided a reason for abandoning academic dress in compliance with the wishes and sentiments of the group. Palante’s analysis comes to mind and his position that *esprit de corps* produced a formal code among members that commonly accentuated the exclusive nature of a club. By the end of the century, Howell’s innocent remarks on “care for the feelings of others” only applied to a selected few.

In order to succeed in moulding the societies’ will in the final vote, interlocutors had to address their fellow students in their social web-like context of individual, debating society, college and the respective local community and utilise patterns of common knowledge and emotional appeal. Kenneth Burke in *Rhetoric of Motives* called this social web “identification”.<sup>29</sup> For Burke, the term entails that “a person might think himself as ‘belonging’ to some special body more or less clearly defined (family, race, profession, church, social class, nation, etc., or various combinations of these). In brief, he may *identify* himself with such bodies or movements, largely through sympathetic attitudes of his own” (Burke 1973, 268). Towards the end of the nineteenth century, this

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<sup>28</sup> Notably, Howell did not render inexcusable the use of humour and sarcasm in debate. Howell’s criticism confirmed the argument (put forth in Chapter two) that humour and amusement were well-established elements of debating practice as long as they succumbed to the parameters of respectability.

<sup>29</sup> Burke observes that rhetoric “is rooted in an essential function of language itself, a function that is wholly realistic and is continually born anew; the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols” (Burke 1950, 43).

process of identification was expanded and challenged by the notion of a New Zealand community that was increasingly influenced by its unique position in the British Empire and the resulting benefits of communication technology as tools for public opinion-formation. Students tended to place themselves at the centre of the British Empire by progressively identifying unique colonial merits. Tournaments of all sorts including the annual collegiate debating competitions became invented traditions that promoted and cemented the ideas of national identification.

### **Debating Tournaments: The Manifestation of *Esprit de Corps***

American and New Zealand collegiate debating societies invented a form of deliberation, intercollegiate debating, that subverted principles of participatory consensus formation and eventually rendered processes of bargaining and final voting redundant. Argumentation was the only one of the three constituents which remained relatively intact for the conduct of debates. Debaters did not have to court the audience's good will and opinion. They likewise could afford to lose bargaining force and concentrate instead on the purity of argumentation and style. As a consequence, the binding dynamics of speaker and audience interaction needed to be replaced by something that still furnished individual members with a sense of belonging to one and the same society. At the end of the nineteenth-century, *esprit de corps* especially in its practical form of competitive debate encapsulated diverse moments of identification.

By the 1890s, American colleges had successfully established the practice of intercollegiate debating.<sup>30</sup> Since 1897, the university debating society in Auckland held tournament debates with the Athenaeum, the Girls Korero Club or even the local

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<sup>30</sup> Opinion on the exact date of the first American intercollegiate debate differs. However, that American colleges invented the tradition is certain. Nichols records that between 1892 and 1902, the tradition of debating tournaments was established in America (Nichols 1936, 217). Harding mentions an intercollegiate debate between Shurtleff College, Illinois and the University of Chicago literary societies before 1876 (Harding 1971, 288). Zarefsky maintains that the debate between the Hinman Society of Northwestern University and the Tri Kappa Society on the 29 November 1878 was the first intercollegiate debate (Zarefsky 2001, 196). From these different sources it is safe to conclude that the Harvard-Yale debate of 1892 was not the first competitive debate ever carried out in America.

Auckland YMCA on a regular basis (SCUA, *minute book*, 24 Aug. 1897, 18 Aug. 1899; *NZH*, 25 Aug. 1897, 5.).<sup>31</sup> These modest beginnings did not yet fully realise the American concept of intercollegiate competitions. However, they already relied on the external judgement of three referees, which matured into a characteristic feature of debating contests in general.<sup>32</sup> The assessment of prize essays by former members or friends of the society was common practice, whereas the separation of the final vote and the audience represented a new stage in the development of debate in New Zealand. In 1901, the colleges in Otago and Canterbury arranged their first intercollegiate debate in Dunedin. The contest was repeated in 1902 and included Dunedin and Christchurch, Auckland and Wellington.<sup>33</sup> The 1902 competition was held in Christchurch and hosted seventy students from four colleges. The occasion stands out among previous and following ones because the enactment of the debating contest led to the discussion of rules of deliberation by tournament judges and stirred considerable discontent among students and members of staff.<sup>34</sup> By 1903, the controversy had quieted down and the contests were resumed. The same year, the tournament took place in Auckland, and the Canterbury and Otago participants had to brave a two-day journey by boat and train, meeting the third party of students on their way in Wellington (*CCR*, June 1903, 12-13). The debates were commonly part of the Easter intercollegiate tournaments, which were composed of tennis matches and athletics competitions with one day dedicated to a

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<sup>31</sup> The tournament debate held in August 1897 is thus the first known competitive debate in New Zealand.

<sup>32</sup> In 1897, three referees presided over the evening: Messrs. Upton and Cooper and Prof. Egerton (*NZH*, 25 Aug. 1897, 5).

<sup>33</sup> Victoria College began teaching in 1899 as the last of the four colonial colleges. As at the other colleges, most students were full-time employees (Hamilton 2002, 12). In contrast to the other colleges, the debating society was initiated by the Students' Association (both founded in 1899). Hamilton shows that in 1904, "sixty students attended the Debating Society's AGM" (13). Barrowman argues that Victoria College excelled in debating "because of its comparative strength in law" (Barrowman 1999, 84). Wellington, before 1929, also won the Joynt Scroll Tournament twelve times. Debating at Victoria College went the way of competition when, in 1905, they inaugurated the Plunket Medal for oratory and the Union Prize for best debater (85, n26).

<sup>34</sup> Societies also slowly revised techniques for inner-society competitions. The minute book of the Auckland University debating society contains a motion to specify the exact proceedings of these inner-society contests. The emergence of inter-collegiate tournaments quite naturally triggered an increase in practising this particular brand of debate. Guidelines and objectives accordingly had to be made very clear (SCUA, *minute book (notice of motion)*, separate typescript, 1902).

debating contest. Due to the numbers of participants, the event involved extensive transportation arrangements, venues and accommodation. The press coverage of the first intercollegiate debate in 1901 was modest compared to the expectation leading up to the tournament of 1903 that would again unite all four New Zealand colleges and involve more than eighty participating students.<sup>35</sup>

In 1901, the panel of three judges from Dunedin consisted of Alexander Wilson, F. R. Chapman (who was a member of the first hour) and Reverent Dean Fitchett (*OUR*, Aug. 1901, 79; *CCR*, Oct. 1901, 18-9, Appendix 7).<sup>36</sup> The custom of selecting the tournament committee from former members and present academic staff was continued in ensuing years. However, in 1902 students had to accommodate the unique situation that the extramural judges aimed at reforming the familiar and fledgling structure of tournament deliberation. Reverent Alfred Averill (1865-1957), Mr. Charles Edmund Bevan-Brown (1854-1926) and W. H. Triggs served on the committee and subsequently forged new criteria (*CCR*, June 1902, 7).<sup>37</sup> The dead heat of the Wellington-Auckland debate in the first round of the tournament might have fired the judges' enthusiasm and made them confident of their proposal. Possibly, the weak performance of the four colleges in general caused the panel to believe that the propositions would be welcomed. In fact, the *Otago University Review* resolved that the debate had lacked vigour and precision and that, therefore, the judges had "had great difficulty in deciding

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<sup>35</sup> The Dunedin *Evening Star* commented on the 1901 tournament with a detailed account of the judges' decision (*OUR*, Aug. 1901, 79).

<sup>36</sup> In 1889, Alexander Wilson had given the opening lecture on *Fiction as a Fine Art*, which was subsequently published by the society. F. R. Chapman had been an active member in the early days of the society between 1878 and 1882.

<sup>37</sup> Nothing is known about Mr. Triggs. However, Reverend Alfred Walter Averill was appointed canon to the Christchurch Cathedral and only one year later became archdeacon of Akaroa. In the clerical community he was an influential but similarly controversial personality. Averill was an outspoken advocate of the ecumenical understanding of faith. Limbrick concludes that "he sought to relate the Christian faith to peace, social justice and responsible citizenship" (Limbrick DNZB). From 1883 until 1920, Charles Edmund Bevan Brown served as headmaster of the Christchurch Boys' High School. He rarely appeared in public except in his support of the Young Citizens' League. Foster maintains that "Bevan Brown believed that the principal aim in teaching should be to build character and that scholastic attainment was not the only criterion of a person's educational standing. He attached immense importance to religion and religious observance and personally superintended the instruction of his senior classes in that subject" (Foster, Te Ara - Encyclopaedia of New Zealand).



between Auckland and Wellington” (*OUR*, Aug. 1902, 77). As a consequence, the committee advised the re-introduction of the final ballot by audience. The new guideline outlines the tournament as a combination of, in total, six debates among twelve delegates. The purpose of competition was to be “to persuade the audience present” (79) in order to secure the closing ballot. The *Otago University Review* concluded that “the judges evidently felt that it was not desirable that the speakers should be advocating positions to which their convictions did not incline them” (*OUR*, Sep. 1902, 86). The judges also added that “a little co-operation instead of all competition in the gatherings of students might be advisable” (*OUR*, Aug. 1902, 79) and imparted to their report a moralising tone.

The first tentative reaction by students concluded that the propositions would initiate the “abandonment of the tournament idea” (*OUR*, Aug. 1902, 79). In consecutive issues of the Otago and Canterbury reviews, the discussion acquired a more passionate tone and made clear that the “tournament idea” mainly referred to the virtues of competition. The Dunedin editorial was very sensitive to the referees’ closing comment on friendly co-operation:

It seems to us that, if these meetings are to constitute a focus for the best that the University of New Zealand can produce, it can only be upon the basis of the strenuous competition of all the colleges. The best way of securing ‘co-operation’ in a common effort to make the contests a success is to stimulate the ‘competition’ among the parts. (*OUR*, Sep. 1902, 86)

This argument failed to see that the spirit of contest was possibly detrimental to the stimulation of fellowship. The editor’s opinion invoked the late nineteenth-century non-judgemental, that is, scientifically objective Darwinian view of conflict and competition as conducive to the progress of the human race; a position that, in the course of the controversy, found its way into the motto *esprit de corps*.

The reaction in Dunedin was provoked by the existence of two diagonally opposed perspectives on the value of community at university colleges as well as in colonial

society. The judges—students of the developing New Zealand colleges of the late 1870s—promoted a forthright humanistic ideal of education that regarded knowledge and truth as rewards and consensual communication as the means to procure them. In other words, truth and knowledge were not the result of competitive pursuit but practical hard labour that sought its application in the New Zealand community. In 1881, Professor Brown in his address “Student Life” identified “friendly combat” as the first goal of the College’s debating society: “friendly combat, where it cannot degenerate into altercation or quarrel, is one of the best schools of thought and speech” (*LT*, 4 April 1881, 5). In 1882, the student Hogben in his essay on Thomas Carlyle blamed competition “cloaked under due laws of war, named ‘fair competition’” for a society that was “in reality the total separation, isolation” (Hogben 1882, 21). In 1884, Professor Haslam warned students in Christchurch that “it is our duty as members of a society like this, not to endeavour to gain dialectic or rhetorical victories over each other; but to aid one another in forming opinions carefully, and maintaining them fairly” (Haslam 1884, 32). The early advocates of debating still saw a divide between ideas of combat and the concept of friendly fellowship. They instead endorsed an ideal of communication that promoted fairness and equality.

Students at the beginning of the twentieth century challenged and reinterpreted this ideal and eventually arrived at a notion of conflict- and competition-seeking discourse that no longer separated “friendly” from “quarrel”. Their explicit goal was to win debating glory for their academic institution and by means of a competitive atmosphere unite their team members under the auspices of the college. In 1894, Alexander Wilson of Otago University, one of the first tournament judges in 1901, alluded to the increasingly competitive atmosphere among people in general. He maintained that “we dare not rest; we must be pushing, and sticking our elbows out, and competing the livelong day and the livelong year” (Wilson 1894, 2). Remarkably, Wilson’s

sentimentalism did not delude him. He clearly realised that he belonged to a different generation and that his students might wholeheartedly embrace their daily struggles:

But I am afraid that in this advanced colony, city, and university I need expect no one to join with me in my sentimental regret for the days that are gone – when an honest fellow could be something out of nothing. Probably you young people will even enjoy the fight for existence, if the fight happens to be successful; but, perhaps also, if it is not so successful, some of you may look back with a wistful regret to the age of ‘Beer and Skittles.’ (3)

In 1898, Professor Gilray’s remark that “it is impossible to get rid of competition” (Gilray 1898, 133) followed the same line of argument. The College’s responsibility to equip students with the best practical education was his justification for combining competition and education. “Life, itself, is to the vast majority a competition; and, if educational institutions are to prepare the young for life, they cannot afford to overlook so prominent a feature of daily life as competition” (ibid.). In other words, the integration of competition in debate mirrored the daily struggles of students. Debating contests were meant to become a training ground for the realities of public life in the colony.

It did not come as a surprise, that in 1902, Professor Black (1835-1914) of Otago University accused the Christchurch panel of turning the “Debating Tournament champions into some of an intellectual hotch-potch” (*OUR*, Sep. 1902, 89).<sup>38</sup> In his letter to the *Review*, he formulated an idea of community that evolves from competition and compared to its American origins:

We must create and maintain a strong *esprit de corps* feeling among the best students of our colleges; and these inter-collegiate contests [*sic*] is just the way to do it. In the United States, where these inter-university debating contests have originated and grown up into most interesting and exciting national events, looked forward to and prepared for quite a year in advance, the elected champions think not of travelling two or three thousand miles to meet each other

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<sup>38</sup> In 1871, James Gow Black came to New Zealand as the newly appointed professor of natural science. After 1877, he became a professor of chemistry and mineralogy. Eventually, with the founding of the School of Mines, he was appointed to the chair of chemistry, a position he held until 1911. Fenby maintains that the “practical application of science was the central focus of his [Black’s] career” (Fenby DNZB). On his extensive lecture tours through New Zealand, he promoted his concept of technical education. The biographical information is based on Fenby in DNZB.

in intellectual battle array. It is always university against university. (*OUR*, Sep. 1902, 89)

Black was not aware that American scholars were far from being unanimous supporters of the concept of competition.<sup>39</sup> His sentiments resonated strongly with New Zealanders' increasing awareness of themselves as a colony and as an indispensable constituent of the British Empire. Professor Black ended his comment by metaphorically comparing the New Zealand debating tournaments with football matches, "in which each side was composed partly of New Zealanders and partly of New South Welshmen, instead of the usual 'colony against colony' match" (*ibid.*). In the latter case, he maintained, an overwhelming audience would follow "every kick and turn, scrum and scramble – big with the fame of a nation" (*ibid.*).<sup>40</sup> In his argument, the university paralleled in structure and in function the inner workings of a nation. Black's comparison well illustrates that only a selected few were meant to actively play the game of nation-building, whereas the majority should be content to watch and cheer those who were striving for victory. Black's debating society and audience were no longer Bates' parliamentary community of 1895. The debating society was there to produce a few leading speakers not a mass of competent orators. Black significantly emphasised the role of strife and difference for any kind of *esprit de corps*. Bates placed his confidence in the commonality that emerges from a consensus-driven rhetorically competent audience.

Students' criticism of the panel's report further aimed at reshaping the individual. The *Reviews* in Dunedin and Christchurch, still discussing the tournaments, disparaged the assumption that debaters "should take part *as individuals*" (*OUR*, Sep. 1902, 86) and

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<sup>39</sup> Chapter five discusses the American controversy between Baker and Ringwalt on intercollegiate debating.

<sup>40</sup> Black alluded to a friction between Australia and New Zealand. In 1901 the issue of an Australian federation reached a new level of immediacy with the founding of the Australian Commonwealth. Since 1883, students had repeatedly discussed imperial federation and Australian federation in particular. In the majority of debates on these two political issues students decided in favour of federation. In 1897, for example, the first recorded tournament between Auckland University and Auckland YMCA addressed this issue (*NZH*, 25 Aug. 1897, 5). Chapter five explores in more detail the issue of Australian federation.

resented the fact that if “any one speaker [is] adjudged the winner, the honour of the occasion is with that one individually, and does not go to his College” (*CCR*, Oct. 1902, 3). The *Reviews* proposed that the purpose of New Zealand debating tournaments was not to identify the better individual; it was rather to create a sense of belonging to the superior college.

The students at Canterbury further added to the controversy by pointing out that an element of spectacle and entertainment would necessarily surface if the unusually large number of speakers were allowed only five minutes each:

In the first place, there would be in all twelve speakers ... able to debate for five minutes at all events, on this topic, no matter what it might happen to be. ... [T]he competition would be worked on somewhat the same lines as the Olla Podrida evening at the Dialectic Society. This evening from the point of view of the audience is exceedingly amusing, but we fail to see how the debating faculties of the competitors would be shewn [*sic*] in a debate held on these lines between the Colleges at the annual tournament. (*CCR*, Oct. 1902, 3)

Their grounds for caution lay in the fact that proper opinions could only be displayed during lengthier intervals and with fewer speakers, that, more precisely, the purpose of the competition was the proficient display of the participants’ debating powers and not the amusement of an audience. The battle of arguments, in other words, was a serious endeavour and not to be confused with such light diversions like Olla Pordidas and mock trials that already featured judges and attorneys in obscure situations.

The argument from the *Canterbury College Review* further employed the audience as an excuse for rejecting the number of speakers and assuming that listeners should not be exposed to numerous speeches: “If those suggestions were carried into effect, the audience would probably have to listen to a repetition of the substance of the first three or four speakers, as it is not likely that among twelve speakers there would be twelve entirely different speeches” (*CCR*, Oct. 1902, 4). It seems remarkable that criticism acknowledged the right of the audience to be well entertained and, at the same time, disenfranchised the same body of people and rendered them mere observers. Not one

contribution to the controversy commented on the changes relating to the process of nominating the champions, which is striking if one considers that the body of judges had made itself redundant with its proposal and would have placed responsibility in the hands of the debaters and/or onlookers. By the end of the century, the transformation from Bates' parliamentary public to Black's university-against-university display was complete.

Students in Dunedin accordingly proclaimed that alteration of the tournament practice "would mean the death of all interest in the contest" (*OUR*, Sep. 1902, 86). They did not expect that entitling the audience to vote (despite other changes), allowing for more speeches or loosening the spirit of competition would suffice to secure the success of the evening. From a members' perspective, the success of a debate was characterised by the undivided attention of the audience and people's anticipation of an argumentative duel. Because practice of the final ballot was a common, formalised and quite unspectacular procedure and the introduction of Olla Podridas and mock trials already provided a forum for short amusing contributions, no one regarded the committee's suggestions as remotely promising. Debating tournaments were envisaged as outstanding public displays of collegiate excellence. As a consequence, the controlling body that organised the tournaments never abandoned the idea of external jurors.

The power of the vote never returned to the audience, who were eventually restricted to watching the display of debating skill. Collegiate debating tournaments in New Zealand, especially after their nascent years, borrowed aspects of American intercollegiate contest and presidential debates. The resemblance is perceptible when Zarefsky describes the Lincoln-Douglas debates:

People arrived early, held picnics and parades, and greeted the arrival of their candidate with frenzied enthusiasm. The debates themselves were carefully managed, however. Timekeepers were strict, and audience demonstrations of

anger or applause were discouraged lest they consume time allocated to either candidate. (Zarefksy 1990, 51)

As in America, debating in New Zealand became well-managed rational amusement. The bargaining moment of standard debate effectively disappeared from tournaments and as training for these inter-collegiate events demanded more attention in societies' individual syllabus, exercises of extempore speeches, intermittent argumentation and even emotional appeal decreased. The audience at tournaments—even though in the majority competent debaters—observed but did not interfere. In 1902, their contribution consisted in performing “numerous cheers and a Maori War-cry for the winners” (*CCR*, June 1902, 7) and in singing the National Anthem. Consensus formation, on as well as off stage, was no longer of interest; instead, the display of competitive dominance was pivotal to debating.

Thus, in the New Zealand controversy about the structure of debating, the discussion of audience and external judgement functioned as surrogate for a more profound question: the position of individual and college in the larger context of university and nation. The controversy about the structure of debating contests helped to articulate an emerging collegiate identity, which united students of one institution but separated individual colleges. Professor Black implied that the ambience of competition provided structure to an otherwise chaotic and “intellectual” process of deliberation, suggesting that humanistic and liberal conceptions of co-operation relied on unstructured, that is, illogical and immeasurable ideals of argumentation. His article disclosed a bifurcation between persuasion relying on intellect and conviction based on logical argumentation. The latter made possible standards of assessment on grounds of difference and antithetical viewpoints, which systemised the individual contribution in a context of community, regulation and belonging. The former created a heterogeneity of rhetorical means and opinions controlled only by the innate rational capabilities of the individual.

Of course, the strenuous (and occasionally also entertaining) attempts at consensus formation in regular debates were not prompted by gold medals or trophies.<sup>41</sup> The well-structured and athletically understood debating contests rectified this situation and bestowed medals on those who had proved themselves worthy. They added a ritualised element to a newly installed tradition and created a secure foundation for future reference. New Zealand intercollegiate debating tournaments matured into an invented tradition with its own customs and ritualised practices as well as emotionally charged signs. By 1902, it had just begun its existence.

## **Conclusion**

Nineteenth-century debaters developed a version of consensus that initially incorporated educational, civic and democratic values. Towards the turn of the century, it integrated yet another purpose—competitive deliberation. New Zealand debating societies were aware of the advantageous heuristic effect of their chosen pastime; students in the colony were very able negotiators of opposing views. Final ballot, argumentation and bargaining moulded consensus and were conducive to the social quality of a debate. However, the specific circumstances under which consensus were formed eventually resulted in the redundancy of its practice and the introduction of an element of competition.

Habermas's work provides a final clue to understanding the essential consequences of these nineteenth-century circumstances. In his defence of reason he distinguishes between normatively regulated, dramaturgical, teleological and communicative action (Habermas 1984, 85-6). The combination of the three worlds – subjective, objective and

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<sup>41</sup> The committee in 1902 suggested abandoning the tournament idea and refraining from awarding a palm to any particular college. Students in Otago then proposed to give gold medals to the delegates of the winning college. The students in Christchurch poured scorn on this suggestion. "The Otagoites are evidently not content with honour and glory, but thirst for gold. ... The proposal if carried into effect, would give the honour rather to the individual than to his college, as is the intention of the competition" (*CCR*, Oct. 1902, 4).



social – is crucial for communicative action and renders it preferable to the other three forms of action. Normatively regulated action relies on factual norms (objective world) which acquire social validity by intersubjective acceptance. From Habermas's point of view, norms, however, do not relate to the subjective world of the individual (88-9). Only dramaturgical action negotiates between the subjective and objective spheres to create an ontological dimension of people's existence because dramaturgical action manifests its significance on grounds of the reflexive character of human self-projection and justification (90-1). Communicative action penetrates all three worlds by means of language (94-7). Every form of human action and the corresponding specific relationship of actor to world are, from Habermas's point of view, suffused with communication. "In the cases of normatively regulated and dramaturgical action we even *have to* suppose a consensus formation among participants that is in principle of a linguistic nature" (94).

Nineteenth-century consensus formation in debate and its previously illustrated practice traverse the gap between normatively regulated and dramaturgical action without ever fully realising its communicative heuristic potential. Herein lies the interpretative paradigm for nineteenth-century debate. From intersubjectively accepted norms articulated in the final ballot, consensus in New Zealand prospered as a highly dramaturgical form of communication that did not succeed in establishing a social relevance for its objectives because it remained confined to the objective and subjective context of the individual. Instead, instigators of tournaments and interlocutors had to call on the cultural authority of traditions to establish a link between their practice and the thriving New Zealand society. Indeed, Habermas maintains that "evaluative expressions or standards of value have justificatory force when they characterize a need in such a way that addressees can, in the framework of a common cultural heritage" (Habermas 1984, 92). As a consequence, the emergence of intercollegiate debating only

addressed the need of a maturing society to create its own grounds for identification. Habermas, in the second volume of *TCA*, agrees that “traditional, habitual forms of life find their expression in particular group identities marked by particular traditions that overlap and overlap one another, compete with one another, and so on” (Habermas, 1987, 108). *Esprit de corps* articulated the specific characteristics of a new debating tradition. New Zealand debating tournaments epitomised a transformation process that amalgamated social concepts of belonging like nation, colony, community, college and even individual.

The disappearance of consensus formation in the form of the intimate relation of ballot, argumentation and bargaining proved fatal for debate as a communicative model in late nineteenth-century New Zealand. First and foremost, reason and rationality – the commonly valued Victorian constituents of deliberation – lost their social, that is, their educational connotation. The controversy surrounding New Zealand debating tournaments is exemplary in this regard. The objective quality of reason was utilised to create measurable standards for the determination of the outcome of competitive debates. Secondly, the closing of debate increasingly nurtured a subjective element. Speakers acted for their college as individuals, relating to their institution by means of representation, show and spectacle. The judge’s duty likewise promoted individual and final opinions without resorting to any elements of painstaking negotiation or argument. Finally, debating was increasingly incapable of generating any objectives traditionally ascribed to its practice: rational discussion, educational advance, civic participation and cultivation of the principle of majority. When debaters began to neglect processes of consensus formation they simultaneously jettisoned debate’s social relevance. Civic participation, democratic practice, acceptance of the other were no longer an integral part of debate but were transferred to the notion of *esprit de corps*, which gradually grew more dominant in debaters’ language and for the self-definition of the audience.

## Chapter Four

### “Screeching, Screaming Hyenas”<sup>1</sup>

#### The Debating Audience of Late-Victorian New Zealand

##### Introduction

The previous chapter contained striking examples of actual physical participation in New Zealand debates, in particular during a period of political antagonism. It would be tempting to argue, based on these observations, that student audiences were largely characterised by a straightforward interest in unruly behaviour and by a lack of reasonable discourse. In fact, students operated with several concepts that attempted to capture the variety of debater-audience relationships. The idea of the hooligan, cultivated in Britain predominantly in the discussion of Kipling’s poetry, assisted New Zealand students to critically identify a group of unwanted individuals that verbally and physically disturbed debating procedure: the Barrackers’ Brigade. Women debaters established another section of audience that, on the one hand, demanded strict adherence to social codes and, on the other, found itself in constant defiance of discursive norms. The existence of these two groups within the New Zealand debating audience emphasised the friction between conceptions of an ideal audience and real debating encounters. The chapter argues that the tension between ideal and real audiences shaped the perception of New Zealand’s university colleges in the colonial city.

Habermas’s concept of universal audience in relation to Chaim Perelman’s work provides a starting point to detect nineteenth-century expectations of an intellectual and well-meaning audience. Nineteenth-century New Zealand discourse on the function of audience essentially hinged upon notions of literary audience. Ideas of readership were frequently linked to issues of good literary taste and the detrimental effect of vulgarity.

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<sup>1</sup> The quotation is taken from *OUR*, June 1901, 38.

The terminology arising from the discussion of these aesthetic, social and moral norms helps to describe the function of individual students disturbing the proceedings of the societies. Moreover, Alexander Bain and Richard Whately influenced the understanding of rhetoric in New Zealand. Their work promoted a form of rhetorical discourse that considered the debater-audience relation as predictable. Their theoretical framework, to a large extent, was determined by scientific methodology and as a consequence, debaters could “conduct” their audience according to patterns of input and reaction. The appearance of women on the New Zealand debating stage challenged these guidelines. The understanding of audience was further complicated by the relationship of city and academe. Eventually, encounters with audiences outside the safe realm of the collegiate debating club lead to a constant redefinition of patterns of seclusion and integration.

### **Meanings of Audience: The Universal and the Particular**

Late-Victorian debaters regarded their audience as dynamic—constantly changing in quality as well as quantity. By the end of the century, pejorative notions of “mass” audience gained ground, a development, which coincided with the disenfranchisement of the listeners in debating tournaments. Before this rejection of audience participation as unreliable, New Zealand debating displayed very diverse ideas of what an audience was meant to do, how it ought to be composed, and most importantly, how it might be swayed. An understanding of audience evolved around pivotal questions such as whether it was acceptable to refer to a congregation as “jackasses” or whether women enjoyed being compared to cocoa advertisements in their capacity of listeners.<sup>2</sup> The literary audience was paramount to these discussions. Jarvis describes trends towards particularisation that register changes within the concept of audience:

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<sup>2</sup> In 1898, the *Otago University Review* compared female debaters with the soothing effects of advertisements: “The influence of ladies always puts one in mind of Epps’s Cocoa, advertisements – grateful and comforting” (*OUR*, May 1898, 20).

Efforts to formulate a proper definition of the term have resulted in the labelling of particular groups with certain characteristics as ‘audience’ and the exclusion of all other groups of auditors. Groups that have not met these criteria are labelled by some as ‘mobs,’ ‘small groups,’ ‘crowds,’ ‘aggregations,’ or the like and are excluded as objects of audience analysis. (Jarvis 2001, 60)

Students in late nineteenth-century New Zealand were in the middle of this process of renegotiating the continuum of the public.<sup>3</sup> The chapter describes students’ struggles with a terminology that aimed at providing points of reference for the unclear category of debating audience.

The division into opposite points of view is intrinsic to an audience in debate. The affirmative challenges the negative and vice versa. Debate does not aim at bridging the divide among participants by introducing benevolent speakers. Instead, the key debaters commonly draw the listeners into either one of the two available argumentative strongholds. A debating audience accepts contrary positions as pivotal to its discursive activity. Rhetorical phenomena do not rely on a homogenous audience; rather, they create sympathetic listeners and ideally foster mutual understanding among them. In rhetoric, the birth of an audience coincides with the existence of a rhetorical situation in which an exigence causes interested people to address an issue, often with the leadership of one or more speakers.<sup>4</sup> Debate takes exception to this practice by

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<sup>3</sup> The phrase “continuum of public” acknowledges Habermas’s concept of public sphere and its criticism. I understand the public as an empirical entity incorporating what Fraser terms “counter-publics” (Fraser 1992, 116f). In “Transnationalising”, Nancy Fraser makes clear that the public sphere needs rethinking to integrate trends that see discourse beyond boundaries of nation-state. (Fraser 2005) I adopt Goode’s view that the public sphere “is an arena in which the *possibility* of understanding and agreement is tested ... it’s the extent to which the procedures allow for the *possibility* of an uncoerced consensus” (Goode 2005, 47). Efforts of argumentative negotiation are not restricted to publics or counter-publics, states, nation-states or empires. The ability to address issues of discursive behaviour is based on a continually changing group of participants and places. The public, therefore, represents a continuum.

<sup>4</sup> The idea of the rhetorical situation was originally formulated by Lloyd F. Bitzer in 1968. He writes: “the rhetorical situation may be defined as a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence” (Bitzer 1968, 6). The three constituents of exigence, audience and constraints are key to Bitzer’s understanding. Because an exigence is rhetorical only if it can be modified, a rhetorical audience, for Bitzer, must consist of individuals who are “capable of being influenced” and are “mediators of change.” In other words, an audience must be willing to negotiate and listen to a speaker’s arguments regardless of circumstantial constraints that might influence or hinder debate. Bitzer acknowledges, for example, that history might have produced traditions that are beyond the control of a rhetorical audience and that channel their discourse. As a consequence, Bitzer envisions an audience that is not free of social

sustaining its binary structure. Debate aims at convincing and persuading the majority of listeners. It builds on human partiality and, as Ehninger maintains, does not and cannot provide any final resolutions. He argues that, if debate were to resolve binaries, it would cease to exist as a concept:

Because debate as method lacks natural termini and does not approach through progressive stages a point which by common consent constitutes a complete and final resolution of the problem which motivates it, debate of itself does not supply answers or decisions which men need not observe and record. (Ehninger 1966, 182)

Debate, as a consequence, relies on the critical attitude of an audience or of external judges, “so that ultimately it is always man himself who must ‘judge’” (182). Debating is an evolutionary method of rhetorical deliberation because it spurs its participants into moulding presented arguments and resisting unifying tendencies. Decisions are not taken by a universal audience but by the individual who applies arguments that have been brought forward in discussion.

Modern American debating manuals always contain a chapter on audience analysis because, today, the judges’ decision in a tournament differs widely from the expectations of a media-educated audience. Freeley and Steinberg, for example, highlight an incident from the Bush-Dukakis presidential debate in 1988, where Dukakis was confronted with the common issue of the death penalty. Asked whether he would sentence a rapist of Kitty Dukakis to death, he replied in the negative. Freeley and Steinberg conclude that in a tournament “the judges would nod with approval and note that the respondent had kept his cool and calmly and dispassionately addressed the issue. But the debate did not take place in a tournament round; it took place before a national TV audience of 62 million viewers, most of whom were not aware of the requirements of tournament debate” (Freeley and Steinberg 2005, 270). Freeley and Steinberg emphasise that audience analysis is crucial to a successful debate, if success is

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and cultural contexts but that is apt to be moved into action by the discourse it engages in. Bitzer’s audience thus does not resist dynamics of discursive change.

determined by an emphatic response from either external judges or a public. Nineteenth-century debaters in New Zealand stood at the threshold of these modern developments in audience perception. They were already aware that audience was by no means a homogenous and reliable constituent. They realised that a debating audience continually revised cultural settings of rhetorical situations. New Zealand students gradually began to negotiate the extent to which the public resisted any generalising concepts.

Contrary to Freeley and Steinberg and nineteenth-century students' attitudes, twentieth-century argumentation theory formulates an ideal of audience that is meant to express the need for mutual agreement among reasonable individuals. Chaim Perelman terms this notion the "universal audience." In *The New Rhetoric and the Humanities* he maintains that individuals will always be part of several audiences as well as the universal audience:

A rhetorical philosophy takes note not only of the existence of differing conceptions of the universal audience but also of the fact that each reasonable person is a member of a plurality of particular audiences, to whose theses he adheres with variable intensity, as well as being a member of the universal audience. It is always important to know with which of these particular audiences any concrete individual is going to identify himself in case of conflict. (Perelman 1979, 49)

Perelman seems unable to perceive of audience as a continuum without a universal core. Like Habermas in his *Theory of Communicative Action*, Perelman perceives of the universal audience as a normative key element for human discourse. He argues that "[i]t is no longer enough to *assume* the agreement of the universal audience; we must rather be effectively *assured* of it. Only the discussion of opposed theses, in a spirit of mutual understanding, will make it possible to locate the elements of the discourse on which an agreement can eventually be reached, provisional though it may be" (48).

Habermas's formulation of argumentation as a process, in other words, as rhetoric, invokes Perelman's theory. Habermas maintains that argumentation as rhetoric "can be conceived as a *reflexive continuation, with different means, of action oriented to reach*

*understanding*” (Habermas 1984, 25) and that “the fundamental intuition connected with argumentation can best be characterised from the process perspective by the intention of convincing a *universal audience* and gaining general assent for an utterance” (26). He goes further than Perelman in insisting on the normative relevance of audience. Perelman only wants to be assured of the possibility of such an audience because, for philosophy, rational discourse with a normative outcome has to remain a possibility. Habermas, instead, identifies the universal audience as the primary motivation for a speaker to employ rational arguments in order to gain common assent. In other words, Habermas’s universal audience provides the necessary backdrop in rhetoric for any decisions on truth values. For him, it was unacceptable that rhetoric—as a concept—should not only be formally but also contextually void of definite resolutions. Nineteenth-century debating practice in New Zealand showed precisely this: neither the debating audience nor the process of debating was perceived as a reliable basis for final motions. Late-Victorian debaters embedded their discussions in certain notions of an ideal audience, which they utilised to criticise the conduct of their contemporaries. In actual discourse, students did not presume to address a universal audience; they were highly sensitive of the fact that their fellow debaters formed a complex audience.

The literary audience was paramount to the idealist notion of audience that nineteenth-century New Zealand students entertained. In the discussion of proper literary consumerism, they struggled with terms like mob, hooligan and mass audience. The rhetorical theories of Alexander Bain and Richard Whately were integral parts of students’ lectures. By the end of the century, these theories were already outdated and provided little assistance in students’ efforts to evaluate phenomena of popular mass culture. Students’ perception of debating as a club activity as opposed to being a public event was marked by a lack of confidence in their position in the colonial society.



Debating was seen as an opportunity to perform before a friendly audience of like-minded students. The debating society provided a safe haven for discourse. The wider public was always regarded with scepticism. In other words, students by the end of the nineteenth century had learnt that “the correct answer in a tournament round is not necessarily the correct answer for a public debate” (Freeley and Steinberg 2005, 271). They were also in the process of determining what a literary audience should be and should expect from the products it was confronted with.

### **The Literary Audience: The “Barrackers’ Brigade” and the Intellectual Reader**

The anxious definition of norms of conduct that dominated students’ rules of consensus was reflected in their views on literary audience. The term “vulgar,” coupled with contempt for personal reference in debate, alluded to the entire range of undesired discursive behaviour.<sup>5</sup> A debater was considered wise who did not underestimate the intellectual level of her audience. In 1895, Scobie Mackenzie, himself a forceful political speaker and in tune with the desires of his audience, excluded all vulgar expressions, but allowed for personal allusions in orations and debates:

Now, when public speaking takes the form of encounter, as of course it must do in debate, the question will arise as to how far personalities are allowable. Most people would tell you at once that they are to be rigidly and absolutely avoided, and as a general sentiment it sounds very well indeed; but I am not so sure that, without qualification, it is such a good advice. Anything approaching to vulgar and offensive personalities are, of course, to be avoided; they are bad in themselves, and they injure alike the cause and the reputation of the speaker. But it seems to me that a man ought to be careful not to become an oratorical prig – for there are oratorical prigs just as there are social prigs. The man who never commits a fault as a speaker, like the man who never commits a fault in any other direction, may be excellent in the abstract, but I should think decidedly insipid. (Mackenzie 1895, 138)

Students heeded Mackenzie’s advice and employed more daring forms of personal reference, even though, as has been pointed out in the previous chapter, the general

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<sup>5</sup> Attridge, for example, emphasises that “vulgar” was “a key term in responses to Kipling. The ideal reader is posited as a frequent image of referral, whose jarred sensibilities can only be recuperated through a refinement of style in accordance with prescribed literary requirements” (Attridge 2003, 75). Vulgar was the direct opposite of the ideal and circumscribed the encounter with the real.

application of Christian names was still deemed inappropriate by some. In 1900, a Mr. Fleming in Dunedin perfected the art of personal allusions by referring “to Socialists as ‘jackasses’ and ‘screeching, screaming hyenas,’ and other similarly complimentary epithets” (*OUR*, June 1901, 38). The audience appreciated his smart comicality but regarded his other assaults as “somewhat too personal” (38).

By avoiding the vulgar, MacKenzie knew, the orator acknowledged the quality of his or her audience. Especially in debate, the contestants were usually also members of the audience and hence found themselves on a par with those assembled. At the end of the nineteenth century, students, through the work of Arnold, Carlyle, Mill and Spencer, were familiar with the controversial issues connected with the rising popular culture. The mass and the mob were quintessential to students’ writing. Prize essays and other items bear witness to students’ awareness of Arnold’s and Carlyle’s critical attitude towards popular taste and the corruption of public opinion. Discussion constantly renegotiated the relation between individual and public and the regulative force of the romantic idea of genius. In 1882, Thomas Carlyle inspired George Hogben to hold the individual responsible for the conduct of the masses: “We hear such phrases as ‘regeneration of the masses,’ ‘growth of the masses’ (in intelligence etc.): Carlyle would remind us that there can be no regeneration or growth of the mass apart from or which does not consist in the regeneration or the growth of the individuals of which the mass is composed” (Hogben 1882, 6). In pursuit of genius as a guiding light for the degenerating masses, Hogben quoted the transcendentalist Emerson: “There are many that can discern genius on his starry track, though the mob is incapable ...” (16).<sup>6</sup> In

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<sup>6</sup> American Transcendentalism, as expressed by Emerson and Thoreau, focused on the individual. Emerson’s notion of the individual as the creature of “reason” had been well established before the Civil War. Reason for Emerson and Thoreau was opposed to understanding. The former described the individual’s “innate capacity to grasp beauty and truth,” the latter was confined to “the use of intellect in the narrow, artificial ways imposed by society” (Brinkley 1993, 306). Mastery of reason became the noblest faculty of the individual. It is remarkable that Hogben would quote Emerson at a time, when his philosophy was already in decline in America. As the reality of the Civil War was creeping into the American consciousness, transcendentalist romantic notions lost their leading role within the American

1892, only ten years later, the *Otago Review*, when commenting on Robert Stout's policies in New Zealand, entertained no sentimentalism about the taste of the masses:

Again 'Addresses were meant not for the students, but to educate the public with reference to the benefits of higher education.' Oh, Sir Robert! You begin at the wrong end. What you have to do is to educate the public up to the point when they will go to such meetings or read such addresses. The only information with reference to the benefits of higher education that the public recollect from last year's capping are the cartoons exhibited and the songs sung. (*OUR*, June 1894, 48)

In other words, the ordinary audience of New Zealand college cities were drawn only to entertaining occasions like graduation ceremonies or national celebrations. Clarke shows that the New Zealand "public" at the end of the nineteenth century was familiar with commemorating public events. In 1887, royal holidays, for example, resulted in one or two jubilee holidays that gave almost everyone the opportunity to join processions or watch the fireworks (Clarke 2002, 147).<sup>7</sup>

Apart from the late nineteenth-century perception that, in an audience, the individual determined general opinion, actual debating circumstances created quite radical, supposedly more realistic variations of this ideal. Part of the debating society consisted

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middle class and New England aristocracy. A more down-to-earth approach was called for in order to deal with the legacy of the great turmoil. Hogben seemed to be under the influence of an American ideology that was already challenged by the realities of American late nineteenth-century culture. Only one year after Hogben, Rev. James Gibb gave a lecture on "James Russel Lowell, Poet and Prophet of the New Era". Gibb maintained that "very few of the poets [Wordsworth, Browning, Tennyson] have excelled or even equalled him in his feeling of 'the sympathies, the hopes, the moods that make man truly man,' or have seen so clearly the Devine ideal of manhood, 'the shrine of reverence and love' which the Most High desires to make the human soul. ... He [Lowell] was not only America's representative man of letters; he was one of the best known and most esteemed citizens" (*OW*, 21 May 1896, 53). Emerson, Thoreau and Lowell were representative of an American era when "literature stood *above* all in the hierarchy of social values, but it was not *before* all. Material needs were primary; the reformer must not offer poetry to the indigent" (Bender 1987, 149). Flanagan shows that when Gibb and Hogben discussed the impact of Transcendentalism and Individualism in New Zealand, America had already moved on to an age of progressivism, where Jane Addams spoke out "against rampant individualism, uninvolved government, the lack of protection against social and economic dislocation, and about the threat of radicalism" (Flanagan 2007, 9). New Zealand academic teachings were quoting authorities which might have reflected the idealistic spirit with which the colony had been set up but that elsewhere had already become outdated.

<sup>7</sup> Clarke also makes clear that the rural population of New Zealand cultivated harvest festivals as a form of public celebration (Clarke 2005). I deduce from Clarke's conclusion that harvest festivals incorporated religious elements that the perception of public and audience in rural regions was influenced by people's self-perception as a congregation or parish rather than an intellectual group. This might prove a fertile starting point for studying rural audiences. Veeder discusses the relevance of the mystic experience in relation to the social relevance of romantic rhetoric in forming a congregation, that is, an alternative audience beyond the factual and reliable. (Veeder 1997, 312-6) In Chapter six, the relation of mystic and factual is discussed in more details.

in students occupying the seats in the back who usually, to say the least, “were apt to be discourteous to speakers” (*OUR*, Oct. 1899, 131). By the Centennial, these students commandeered the rest of the audience. One evening in September 1899 in Dunedin, “none of the ‘Barrackers’ Brigade” were present, a phrase that referred to the rowdies, “the *betes noirs* of every chairman and earnest debater” (*OUR*, Sept. 1899, 102). Their presence, at the time, was accepted as an indispensable element of collegiate debating.<sup>8</sup> At one point, in 1899, the “standing contingent at the back of the hall” (*OUR*, Oct. 1899, 131) were even portrayed as guardians of the intellectual merit and the lesser of two evils. The unknown author argues that “they were a terror to praters; and lately I have wished for their presence to suppress the praters of to-day” (*OUR*, Oct. 1899, 131). This, it is safe to say, was a singular position and in general, the occupants of the seats in the back did not excite enthusiastic praise.<sup>9</sup>

The reference of “Barrackers’ Brigade” to Kipling’s collection of poems in *Barrack Room Ballads* (1892) and to military terminology can be regarded as intentional allusion to the late-Victorian idea of the hooligan. It perfectly represents the fusion of different modes of discourse: the critical contemplation of readership and norms of public taste and conduct. Attridge points out that by 1908, the book had seen twenty-five editions (Attridge 2003, 200 n1). Kipling was very popular in New Zealand in general and, in 1892 and 1897, college students in Auckland and Christchurch reviewed

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<sup>8</sup> In the US of the 1850s William Dean Howells uses a similar metaphor to describe the intellectual environment in which he grew up. He recalled that, in his father’s printing office in a small Ohio town about 1850, “there was always a good deal of talk going on. ... When it was not mere banter, it was mostly literary; we disputed about authors among ourselves and with the village wits who dropped in. There were several of these who were readers, and they liked to stand with their back to our stove and challenge opinion concerning Holmes and Poe, Irving and Macaulay, Pope and Byron, Dickens and Shakespeare.” (qtd. in Bender 1993, 8). Uses of the term “back” appear to have been common physical references to those parts of the audience who challenged the norm—in America as well as New Zealand.

<sup>9</sup> “We shall, however, say nothing more than remind students that our debaters are not hardened political speakers. This being so, the constant interruptions from the back benches not only seriously impair the efforts of the leaders, but also deter new men from getting to their feet” (*OUR*, June 1901, 38).

his work, in particular his poetry.<sup>10</sup> The use of the term “Barrackers’ Brigade” in New Zealand coincided with the publication of Robert Buchanan’s essay “The Voice of the Hooligan” in the *Contemporary Review* of 1899, a critical article that amalgamated Kipling’s oeuvre with the controversial term ‘hooligan’ and the patriotic atmosphere of the Boer War.<sup>11</sup> New Zealand students very likely knew Buchanan’s critical contribution to the debate on the culture of the hooligan. In 1897, the *Canterbury College Review* recommended the *Contemporary Review* as fundamental reading material, especially for use in the meetings of the Dialectic Society (CCR, Oct. 1897, 39).

Very early, the pervasive terminology of the late nineteenth-century Empire found a way into debating jargon in New Zealand, even though the South African experience had yet to exert its influence on the New Zealand public. Discussion of public culture, in particular the insecure territory of mass and popular culture, aided the critical contemplation of Kipling’s poetry. Buchanan associated the increasing influence of the mass with the emergence of imperial sentiment:

The Mob, promised a merry time by the governing classes, just as the Roman mob was deluded by bread and pageants—*panem et circenses*—dances merrily to patriotic Wartunes [*sic*], while that modern monstrosity and anachronism, the Conservative Working Man, exchanges the birthright of freedom and free thought for a pat on the head from any little rump-fed lord that steps his way and spouts the platitudes of Cockney patriotism. (Buchanan 1899, 776)

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<sup>10</sup> In 1891, Kipling went to New Zealand. During his visit, newspaper coverage was considerable. Based on his observations in New Zealand, he wrote the short story “One Lady at Wairakei”. In the story, a presumably ignorant New Zealand tourist is convinced by the lady Truth that despite his prejudice, New Zealand will prosper and aspire to nationhood. Truth eventually scolds the traveller for assuming that New Zealanders will produce a distinct colonial literature. New Zealand will instead experience a literature for and by the people (Kipling 1992, 27). Kipling’s popularity among nineteenth-century students might well be attributed to the favourable picture that he created in “One Lady at Wairakei.” Moreover, Kipling’s acquaintances in New Zealand included Professor Haslam of Canterbury College. Gardner et al. recalls that “[i]t was from Haslam that Rudyard Kipling took the character of King in *Stalky and Co.* (1899)” (Gardner et. al 1973, 91). Wall writes in his memoirs that Haslam “had been a an assistant master at Westward Ho when Kipling was there a pupil, and he appears in *Stalky and Co.*, a fact of which he was very proud” (Wall 1965, 89).

<sup>11</sup> Attridge provides a thorough insight into the dynamics that led to Buchanan’s article (Attridge 2003, 70-106).

Buchanan openly accused Kipling of deliberately fuelling lower-class “Cockney” ignorance at a time when England had to cultivate high-brow culture. Buchanan’s statement also showed that the perception of audience was more and more suffused by discussions of respectability and the intellectual merit of the individual. In other words, the role of spectator and even interlocutor became less strictly circumscribed as well as being exposed to a variety of new forms of audience participation because the tension between individual responsibility and mass anonymity opened a void. Kipling’s *Ballads*, as Attridge makes clear, negotiated these unclear boundaries of self-definition in the military context of Empire: “In the 1890s the critical problem which the *Ballads* posed was the extent to which they should be considered as part of a popular, or mass, culture, rather than an exclusively literary one” (Attridge 2003, 73). Kipling had fused influences from music-hall songs, slang and dialect not simply to invoke realism but to create a “defining structure of his work” (74). Buchanan particularly aimed at Kipling’s preference for dialect by using the phrase “Cockney patriotism” for the supposedly worst type of mass frenzy. Buchanan thus failed to notice Kipling’s sympathetic perspective on the lower strata of British society, a perspective that made the *Ballads* unique in their time.

New Zealand students’ lines of argument were fairly similar to Buchanan’s railing against Kipling’s shortcomings as a responsible author. Buchanan, in his article, lamented the loss of the humanistic ideal in Kipling’s writing as well as in society at large:

At that time, the influence of the great Leaders of modern Thought was still felt, both in politics and literature; the gospel of Humanity, as expressed in the language of poets like Wordsworth and Shelley, and in the deed of men like Wilberforce and Mazzini, had purified the air men breathed; and down lower, in the humbler spheres of duty and human endeavour, humanists like Dickens were translating the results of religious aspiration into such simple and happy speeches as even the lowliest of students could understand. (Buchanan 1899, 775)

In 1894, the Christchurch student Thomas W. Cane<sup>12</sup> used almost identical language to voice his contempt for the literary audience of his time: “It was in vain that Scott and Dickens and Jane Austen purified literature and gave it a loftier tone. Their work is all undone by such authors as Hardy & Gissing & Rudyard Kipling” (Cane, manuscript 1894, MBL, 17). He maintained that the late-Victorian literary audience had acquired all the negative connotations of a gossiping, low and unrefined public: “Every magazine, nearly every newspaper has its serial stories running from mouth to mouth. As soon as one is done with, another fills its place, and the stream of books is ever unceasing, so vast is the audience and so insatiable its hunger for more” (1). He pessimistically claimed that “we have no time to wait for genius today” (2) and explained that authors had to concur with popular taste to secure their survival: “There is no such thing as “fit audience though few”—the publishers see to that. They are the middle-men in the new trade of novel-writing. It is the business of the authors to feed their many-headed monster with food that is acceptable” (3). Cane’s opinion is exemplary of late-Victorian middle-class scepticism. However, he surprised the reader at the end of his essay by maintaining that not all was lost for the literary public. A young and educated author, he professes his faith in freedom of speech and public criticism, despite his occasionally presumptuous style:

We are freeing ourselves from the old chain of convention. If many things are written and read which would not have been countenanced 50 years ago it shows that we are becoming more tolerant of opinion. If it is importunate that art should be made the channel for social criticism it is a sign of freedom that such criticism is tolerated. There must be freedom of speech and discussion. Thus the modern novelists, even if their work is sometimes revolting, are doing a little towards furthering the happiness of the race. (27)

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<sup>12</sup> Hight and Candy list Cane as enrolled in 1891. Cane was originally from Sussex, England. In 1892, he obtained his B.A. from Canterbury College. The following year, he successfully completed his M.A. and became Assistant Master at the Cathedral School in Christchurch. In 1895, he became President of the Dialectic Society. Between 1911 and 1920, he was Assistant Lecturer at the College in Latin and English. (Hight and Candy 1927, 204)

Cane's conviction stems from an almost unrelenting belief in the power of progress, possibly combined with a young man's inclination to approve of the world one way or another.

The same year in Dunedin, Alexander Wilson (1849-1929) opened the debating session with a lecture on the Georgian novelists.<sup>13</sup> In comparing the literary audience of his day to earlier centuries, he considered that it was less patient with aspiring writers; "the general reader," he lamented, demanded brief and inspired plots: "Nowadays there are so many books clamouring for notice that an author's only chance of enforcing attention is to come to the point at once, *sans phrase*" (Wilson 1894, 5). Wilson further added an ounce of the ideal to complete the recipe for an acceptable pastime. In 1889, he addressed the Dunedin debating society on the composition of fiction. In his lecture, Wilson emphasised the need for an educated and well-informed audience:

[A]ll good art should, in the first place, be interpretative, by which I mean that it should afford that sort of moral and intellectual pleasure that comes of the perception of truth; and, in the second place, that it should satisfy a certain human longing after something other or more than we possess – in other words, that it should satisfy an ideal. (Wilson 1889, 12)

His view of wide-spread literacy and readable literature evoked Carlyle's belief that popular taste depended first and foremost on the individual and her inner "genius", even though "human longing" presupposed a regulative ideal common to most readers.

Wilson acknowledged that the New Zealand readership was able to distinguish between good and bad prose. Wilson and Cane agreed that the novel's objective was to entertain

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<sup>13</sup> Alexander Wilson was born in Scotland and grew up as a son of an architect. In 1869, he graduated M.A. from Aberdeen University. He spent 1870 in Germany, and until his immigration to New Zealand, earned his living by private tutoring in London. In 1874, he came to New Zealand. He was immediately employed as part-time English master at Otago's Boys' High School and ten years later, became acting rector of Otago Girls' High School, the only male principal in the school's history. Wilson was an active defender of women's higher education, even though he maintained that girls should learn cooking and sewing and did not regard higher education as the goal of the majority of women. He also made physical education compulsory twice a week. Page maintains that he was also "a devoted gardener, specialising in bulbs. Invited to launch a debating club in Lawrence, he spoke on daffodils, taking bulbs and flowers with him, which led to extensive planting in the district" (Page in *Southern People* 1998, 550). In 1906, Wilson left New Zealand for England but eventually settled in Inverness, where he died in 1929. The biographical information is based on Dorothy Page's article in *Southern People* 1998, 549-50; Page 1992, 105.



readers. Cane, however, almost gave up his contemporaries as a hopeless and uncritical mob.

In a newspaper review of Wilson's lecture of 1889, the author concluded that "[t]he paramount function of the novel is to be recreative and amusing. ... The one unpardonable sin in a novel is dullness. ... To give emotional pleasure is the first duty of fiction as it is of the other fine arts. Let it teach special lessons if it can, but it does so at its peril" (*OW*, 6 June 1889, 28). A few years later, the earlier mentioned Rev. Gibb in his lecture on James Russell Lowell struck an entirely different tone. For him, Lowell's work was thoroughly "didactic" (*OW*, 21 May 1896, 53). What Wilson saw as detrimental to the quality of a literary work, Gibb regarded as an ideal. He considered literature without an orientation towards public education and refinement as "a veritable emanation from the devil" (53). As a consequence, on the one hand, debaters in Dunedin were confronted with a view of the literary audience that emphasised its moral and intellectual elevation through art. Moreover, this perspective did not consider the New Zealand public fit to be a critical audience. On the other, students listened to Wilson who did not see the need for art to "teach special lessons" (28) and emphasised the relaxing qualities of the genre.

A discussion of Thomas Hardy's novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* exemplified these contrasting views on the worth of the reading audience. In 1895, the Dunedin student George F. K. Adams won the prize essay competition with his contribution "The Modern Novel." While heralding Olive Schreiner as the outstanding modern novelist, Adams reserved his praise for Thomas Hardy. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, from Adams point of view, was Hardy's "finest work" and "one of the most beautiful creations of modern literature" (Adams 1895, 101):

It tells its tale of sorrow, of suffering, of the fruit that turns to ashes between the teeth, in a way that elevates by its purity and chastens by its terror and pity. In his preface Hardy says: 'The story is an attempt to give artistic form to a true

sequence of things'; and how successful this attempt has been we leave the reader to judge. Not a trace of indecency or of pruriency can suggest itself to a pure mind; we might even say that 'the winds of heaven blow along its pages.' (101)

By contrast, Cane abhorred Hardy's work and regarded it as "immoral and revolting" and "strongly prejudiced" (Cane, manuscript 1894, MBL, 16). Cane used *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* to point out one of the lowliest creations of modern writing. In his essay, Cane accused Hardy of being "quite unconcerned" because "he knows that modern taste is not easily shocked" (17). He mentioned Hardy and Kipling in one breath with Gissing and eventually resolved that "[b]ooks must be written to sell and nothing can enhance their chances of success more completely than their treading upon forbidden ground" (17). Even though Adams in general agreed with Cane that the modern novel had a deplorable moral effect on its readers and that its "artistic effect is a blot", he made Hardy and Schreiner exceptions and, like Wilson, raised the reader to the rank of critic. Cane, like Gibb, could condemn the modern novel in its entirety because he discarded the idea of the reader as an able judge of popular taste. Instead, he promoted the modern author, whom he had condemned earlier, as the catalyst of intellectual improvement, happiness and freedom of speech.

Hogben, Cane, Gibb, Wilson, Adams and Buchanan engaged in a discourse that was representative of late-Victorian efforts to define norms of public and audience culture. Their arguments were restricted by traditions of audience perception. The role of the individual as genius dominated their efforts to locate discursive responsibility in an audience. Cane, Gibb, Hogben and Buchanan placed their trust in the capabilities of the author. Their scepticism was symptomatic of late-Victorian disenfranchisement of the audience in general. Student debate today does not require an audience; it demands a judge. Zarefsky maintains that "the final essential component of a debate is the decision maker or judge" who is "sometimes isomorphic with the audience" (Zarefsky 2001,

193). Cane's, Gibb's, Hogben's and Buchanan's contributions represent the beginnings of this position and, in Habermas's thinking, the shift of debate towards argumentation as a procedure rather than a process. Adams and Wilson were inclined to rely on the decision-making powers of the audience. The literary public, from their point of view, was not defined by static norms. They conceived of it as a heterogeneous mass that determined popular tastes in a continuous process of revision. Adams did not judge Hardy according to preconceived ideas of middle-class taste. His perception of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is immediate and spontaneous. Translated into Habermasian terminology, Adams' and Wilson's audience continued to inhabit the realm of rhetoric, in other words, of argumentation as process in which the audience moulded the concerns of the day.

### **Alexander Bain and Richard Whately: Rhetoric as Science**

Students in New Zealand had access to works by the renowned English and Scottish authors of rhetoric, Alexander Bain and Richard Whately, who had investigated the nature of rhetoric as composition. Their teachings were part of a new school of rhetoric which emphasised style and popularised rhetoric as the art of correct writing.<sup>14</sup> James A. Berlin and Sharon Crowley term it "current-traditional rhetoric" and criticise its focus on the correctness of language and its neglect of components of argumentative

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<sup>14</sup> Berlin observes that current-traditional rhetoric embraced a scientific approach of discourse. He concludes that "current-traditional rhetoric is the triumph of the scientific and technical world view" (Berlin 1984, 62). The concept neglected processes of invention as the focus consisted in the reporting of arguments not in their creation. Moreover, audience was a significant component only insofar as it could be "conducted" and effects could be reproduced (63). In the 1890s, the introduction of the paragraph to composition studies at university colleges in America and New Zealand was one outcome of Bain's current-traditional textbooks (68). Crowley, Berlin, and Nan Johnson trace the origins of American current-traditional rhetoric back to the British New Rhetorics: Whately, Priestley and Campbell (Crowley 1990, Berlin 1984, Johnson 1991, 19-63). According to Crowley, current-traditional rhetoric represents that fusion of discourse theory, logic and psychology (Crowley 1990, 12). In New Zealand, because of his stress on logic and psychology, Bain became part of the curriculum of Mental Science. In 1880, for example, applicants for the New Zealand University senior scholarship had to answer the question: "Examine the sufficiency of this expression of the Law of Causation: - 'Every event that happens is definitely and uniformly connected with some prior event or events, which happening it happens, and which failing it fails' (Bain)" (NZUC, 1880, lxxxix). Bain's influence on teachings in logic is analysed in chapter six of this thesis.

invention.<sup>15</sup> Bain and Whately became the representatives of current-traditional rhetoric in New Zealand. In the colony, rhetoric presumably was no longer considered the art of public speaking but a subcategory of composition in the English curriculum. It is not surprising then that Bain and Whately ascribe a rather limited role to audience. Their methods defended an empiricist model of emotional and rational appeal. In other words, if a speaker mastered the art of composition, s/he would be capable of conducting her audience through an evening by evoking certain emotions through corresponding stylistic patterns.

In 1882, Professor Brown at the University of Otago required his students to read Alexander Bain's *English Composition and Rhetoric* (OUC 1882). In 1891, he offered an advanced class on "English Composition and Rhetoric" which still listed Bain as the primary reference. Brown's course was designed to be "a systematic study of the rules of correct writing and the principles of Rhetoric and Literature. Under this head notes will be given in expansion and illustration of the matter supplied by the Textbook" (OUC 1891, 51). In 1899, an unknown author in her prize essay for the dialectic society at Canterbury College mentioned Bain as one of the great "educational philosophers" (System of Education, manuscript A, MBL, 2) of the times. Alexander Bain (1818-1903) was one of the most prominent scholars of Scottish Utilitarianism. His books on rhetorical theory were exemplary of a thoroughly practical approach embedded in scientific psychology. His *English Composition and Rhetoric* was the result of revision of his earlier publications.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The term was coined by John F. Genung in 1886 (Connors 1985, 56) and Daniel Fogarty (Stewart 1990, 162). There were alternative theories that challenged current-traditional rhetoric, for example, Fred Newton Scott (Berlin (1984) ch. 7) and Henry N. Day's rhetoric of explanation (Connors 1985), but they did not gain enough footholds on the market.

<sup>16</sup> I specifically refer to the following textbooks: *Higher English Grammar* (1863), *An English Grammar* (1863), *Manual of Rhetoric* (1866), *A First English Grammar* (1872), *Companion to the Higher Grammar* (1874).

Bain combined structural components like the number and order of words, rules for the composition of sentences and paragraphs, and elements of speech with an extraordinarily detailed analysis of emotions. *English Composition*'s second volume dealt exclusively with the "emotional qualities of style," whereas the first volume was dedicated to the "intellectual qualities" of composition. Bain, in his textbooks, drew on examples from literature and philosophy. In *English Composition*, these were the stock authors of an English education of the time: Wordsworth, Burns, Scott, Byron, Shelley, Tennyson, Shakespeare, Spenser, Mill, Carlyle and Matthew Arnold. For Bain, rhetoric aided literary composition by inserting (according to specific rules) emotional reference in written passages. He, for example, assigns the "rhetorical arts of eulogy" to "the poetry of the moral sublime" (Bain 1887, 1:7). The re-classification of figures of speech in rhetoric was one of Bain's goals: "the ancient authors of the Rhetorical art not only originated a considerable part of our critical vocabulary, but discussed many of the fundamentals of style and composition. Their enumeration of Figures in detail was voluminous, while the classification of them was imperfect" (vi). Bain omitted to use the traditional constituents of rhetorical composition—description, narration, exposition and oratory—to clarify for his readership the modes of rhetoric. Instead, he adopted an entirely new system which integrated elements of each of the four modes. He, for example introduced the "Picturesque," which dealt with issues of description (263-277). Bain's intention in writing *English Composition* was "to arrive at a definite code of prescriptions for regulating the Intellectual Qualities of composition" and "to mark out the department as a fit subject for school discipline, at the proper stage; not to mention its direct bearing upon the valuable accomplishment of writing well" (vii). Buchanan's and Cane's metaphorical associations of good British literature with "purified air" and "purified literature" come to mind when considering the standards Bain professed for composition. Bain, Buchanan and Cane wanted to raise the supposedly low standards of

Victorian writing by “purifying” everything that was considered confused, lax or even morally detrimental. Regarding late nineteenth-century American society, Bender draws a similar conclusion when discussing the Americans’ opinion of the lyceum movement: “[s]uch words as *flatness*, *superficiality*, *sentimentalism*, *ineffectual*, *confused*, *lax*, and *simplification* recur in historical writing about the period’s thought” (Bender 1993, 11). Bain intended to counterbalance what he saw as weak literary habits by enforcing a rigorous structure on rhetorical composition and a method that predicted the audience’s reactions.

The prize essay for 1899 of the Otago University debating society, “The Influence of Natural Conditions in New Zealand on the National Character” revealed that a part of the student body was familiar with the theories of Richard Whately (1787-1893), another practically inclined rhetorician:

Archbishop Whately, in his work on rhetoric, deals very strikingly with the effect of numbers in swelling the emotional susceptibilities of an audience. Often that which can send a thrill of fervour through a vast concourse of people would, if addressed to one or a small number, appear as mere hyperbolic rant. The strength of personality behind each utterance is augmented by every person present, for every one is conscious that the whole fathoming is moved similarly to himself. There is thus an echoing and re-echoing of feeling, a kind of mental resonance, which intensifies the effect. (Natural Conditions, 1899, 110)

The statement alludes to an emotional and mental quality of rhetoric, which was considered to create a genuine audience on the basis of shared sentiments. Whately’s works were thoroughly pedagogical textbooks with a “practical bias” (Berlin 1980, 12), an emphasis he had in common with Bain that also might explain his popularity in New Zealand.<sup>17</sup> Professors in the colony favoured textbooks for their teaching because costs were lower and their application almost universal.<sup>18</sup> Whately uniquely combined a

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<sup>17</sup> The significance of Whately at New Zealand university colleges is not surprising if his popularity at American colleges is taken into account. Berlin and Kitzhaber point out that Whately’s *Elements of Rhetoric* was in use at American colleges as late as the 1880s (Berlin 1980, 10; Kitzhaber 1990, 87-89).

<sup>18</sup> Lillian H. Williams, a former student and member of the Dialectic Society recalls in an interview that “we [the students] had to rely almost entirely on text-books. I still remember with horror Morley’s ‘History of English Literature’ which we all had to use! ... Because of this great reliance on text-books

strong sense of rational argumentation with a defence of the separation of logic and rhetoric.<sup>19</sup> He constructed a very technical rhetoric which presupposed a one-to-one correspondence between stylistic input and audience reaction. Unfortunately, in contemporary scholarship, the implications of Whately's ideas (like presumption, burden of proof or "natural" delivery) are still relatively unexplored. Zappen illustrates that Whately's work is part of the tradition of psychological-epistemological rhetoric, "so-called because they were concerned with the adaptation, selection, and expression rather than the discovery of proofs" (Zappen 1991, 151).<sup>20</sup> Lillian H. Williams, a member of the Dialectic Society, remembered her irritation at this method, which she saw as leaving "very little room for originality" (Williams interview, Gardner Papers, 4).

The role of genius in rhetoric was pivotal to Whately's theory. He maintained that "genius begins where rules end" (Whately, 1965, xxv). Berlin observes that rhetoric for Whately was a "rule-governed procedure having to do with arrangement and style" (Berlin 1980, 13). These themes were at the centre of nineteenth-century New Zealand debate. From his predecessors, Whately adopted a perspective on audience that would assist the composition of an intelligible and well-argued speech.<sup>21</sup> He did not however

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we were left very little room for originality and I personally found this most irritating. The only other way we could learn was through lectures" (Williams interview, Gardner Papers, 4)

<sup>19</sup> Zappen shows that Whately's work provided "a system for classification of proofs: a division of the forms of arguments and rules for their use for the purpose of conviction (35-168) and a division of the 'Active Principles' of human nature – including both the passions (emotions) of the hearer and the character of the speaker – and rules for their use for the purpose of persuasion" (Zappen 1991, 151).

<sup>20</sup> Connors describes this school of rhetoric and Whately's theory as "rhetoric of explanation" (Connors 1985). Connors argues that in particular Bain furthered the "growth of explanatory pedagogy" (55) and that his "category of exposition ... was confined to scientific exposition and not concerned with any sort of popular explanation" (54). Zappen shifts the focus of analysis away from the didactic purpose of Whately's and Bain's rhetoric towards their methodological orientation. Despite his different use of terminology, he draws the same conclusion as Connors: Whately's rhetoric focuses on formalised scientific methodology.

<sup>21</sup> Ehninger (1963) as well as Berlin (1980) confirm that Whately responded to the writings of Hugh Blair (1970) and George Campbell (1963) who placed the audience at the centre of their rhetorical theory because they see a direct relation between "the faculties of the auditor and the ends that a speaker attempts" (Berlin 1980, 13). These ends are "to enlighten the understanding, to please the imagination, to move the passions, or to influence the will" (Campbell 1963, 1). Moreover, Whately was convinced that he wrote in the tradition of Aristotle; a position that has since been emphatically contradicted in the works of Berlin, Ehninger and most significantly in Perelman's revision of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*.

clarify how students should arrive at the propositions which would underpin these demonstrations of oratory. In other words, Whately left everything beyond the rules of rhetorical construction and delivery to the vague idea of “genius.” Within the catalogue of rhetorical rule, Whately was considerably precise. Whately determined that any subject that interested the students would serve for discussion. He preferred composition of argument to content-related questions and emphasised techniques that would allow an aspiring rhetorician to compose rather than invent a sound argument.<sup>22</sup> In 1828, with the publication of his *Elements of Rhetoric*, Whately favoured deduction rather than induction as the most precise and effective rhetorical device for constructing logical argumentation.<sup>23</sup>

Rhetorical instruction at Otago University promoted analytical utilitarian notions of speech composition.<sup>24</sup> Whately and Bain defended the empiricist idea that a linguistic input could produce a predictable effect in the persons addressed. In *The Emotions and the Will*, Bain analysed deliberation (in other words, debate) as a “voluntary act” which

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<sup>22</sup> Invention features prominently in American research on the teachings of rhetoric in the nineteenth century. Berlin explains that the notion of invention almost disappeared (Berlin 1981); Crowley discusses the function of memory and maintains that invention still existed in nineteenth-century rhetoric (Crowley 1985 and 1990); Halloran argues that invention underwent conceptual changes during that time (Halloran 1982, 257-263). Crowley argues that invention prior to current-traditional rhetoric was a process of discourse in a community, in which knowledge production was linked to language. Under the influence of Bain and Whately, invention became a mechanical tool of rhetoric that practically supplied “speakers and writer with instructions for finding the specific arguments that are appropriate to a given rhetorical situation” (Crowley 1990, 2). From a theoretical point of view, invention denoted “all the possible means by which arguments or proofs can be discovered and developed” (ibid.). In New Zealand, complaints about “cram” were typical student reactions towards the didactic methods of current-traditional rhetoric. In 1898, Miss Brown, author of the prize essay at Otago accused university teaching of cramming. In her discussion she emphasised that “[k]nowledge that is to be of permanent value must be slowly assimilated” (Brown 1898, 103). She also was of the opinion that university courses should be specialised and limited in scope. Professor Gilray, the examiner of the prize essays, remarked that “[t]here is no subject connected with education on which so much nonsense has been written and spoken as *cram*. Some people use *cram* as a synonym for all memory work” (Gilray 1898, 132). The professor concluded that “nothing pays better with a skilful examiner than excellent method, arrangement, and composition; and these can certainly not be crammed” (ibid.).

<sup>23</sup> Chapter six analyses in more detail the relation of induction and deduction for late-Victorian methods of argumentation in New Zealand.

<sup>24</sup> Professor Macmillan Brown at Canterbury College instructed his students in Composition. Only in 1878, examinations included rhetoric. The *Canterbury College Calendar* of 1879 listed under English: “examinations on the General History of English Literature, on special works or pieces of old authors, and on the rules of Rhetoric and Composition” (CCC, 1879, 66f). Composition for Brown amounted mainly to teachings of syntax, grammar and philology. The examination questions in Greek and Latin make clear that students had to be familiar with the works of Plato and Aristotle.



negotiated between two extremes: “no amount of complication is ever able to disguise the general fact, that our voluntary activity is moved by the two great classes of stimulants; either a pleasure or a pain, present or remote, must lurk in every situation that drives us into action” (Bain 1888, 411). Emotionally, according to Bain, a debating audience oscillated between the painful and the pleasing experiences that were connected with an issue. In nineteenth-century New Zealand, the role of the debaters demanded that they safely conducted the audience through this journey of emotional upheavals. Language was considered the most effective means to achieve this end.

When Howell wrote of the art of oratory as having “entire command over the minds of your hearers” (Howell 1893, 135), he aspired to an ideal rather than a version of rhetoric that the twentieth century would call propaganda.<sup>25</sup> Reviews of debating evenings frequently used the expression “to conduct” to describe a speaker’s command of her audience. In 1894, professor Gibbons “conducted the audience through the largest towns of Northern Italy ... and under the able guidance of the lecturer, the audience were carried along with an interest that never flagged” (*OUR*, Aug. 1894, 78). In 1895, a journalist summarised Scobie Mackenzie’s lecture with the words: “The way in which the lecturer conducted his hearers behind the scenes in regard to ‘impromptu’ speaking was much appreciated – his own experiences very much so” (*OW*, 19 Sept. 1895, 20). In 1879, John Innes in his diary recalled a political speech given by Sir George Grey in

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<sup>25</sup> Propaganda differs from rhetoric insofar as it strives to manipulate common opinion by spreading one dominant point of view. Rhetoric, by contrast, is based on the principle of speech and counter-speech. Rhetoric always accepts the possibility of a perspective, which might be entirely opposed to the one put forward. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss the development of propaganda. Ueding 2005, 266-290 and Enos 1996, 566-569 provide information on this point. The *OED* makes clear that at the end of the nineteenth century, the term propaganda was used for “any association, systematic scheme, or concerted movement for the propagation of a particular doctrine or practice” (*OED* s.v. “propaganda”). Doering-Manteuffel demonstrates that the nineteenth century provided the basis for the twentieth-century phenomenon. She identifies seven key reasons for the emergence of propaganda: the aggressive use of the term for political ideologies; the creation of pamphlets and flyers as written manifestation of any political scheme; the emergence of societies, associations, political parties etc.; the creation of a theory of the “masses;” the increasing availability of mass communication means; the improvement of transportation and infrastructure; the use of specific slogans and catchphrases in a political and ideological context (Doering-Manteuffel 2005, 277). In New Zealand, nineteenth-century students did not yet distinguish between rhetoric and propaganda.

Christchurch. Part of the audience made an unexpected and violent move at the platform and the orator had to defend his physical presence at the political event: “The gentlemen seated on the platform (including Prof. Cook!) rose quickly from their chairs and began to move towards the back of the platform. Sir George stood straight; and said ‘I never turned my back yet.’ And the rush stopped before it reached the platform” (Innes, Diary, 30 July 1879). As early as 1884, debate was styled “the art of persuasion and disputation” by Professor Haslam. In other words, to debate meant “to convince yourself of some great truth ... and to persuade all men that it is true also for them” (Haslam 1884, 9). The credibility of the entire persona of the speaker aided her cause. Howell concluded that “nothing is so productive of spirit and liveliness as earnestness; nothing so delightful to the audience as to become aware that the whole speaker’s soul is thrilling through his words, and making them flow, like the speech of aged Nestor, more sweetly than honey” (Howell 1893, 134). Howell and Haslam suggested that the audience was not lured into believing improbable chimera but had to be persuaded of the truth of the speaker’s claims by a combination of his personal integrity, physical presence and the force of the better argument. Late-Victorian New Zealand students believed that the impact a debater had on her listeners depended on the command s/he had over the emotional and intellectual faculties of her audience. The credibility of a debater derived from the responsibility s/he accepted in guiding other students.

Ordinary debates in New Zealand fell into the realm of argumentation and rhetoric as science. They traditionally intrigued by their argumentative force not by their expository nature. Whately formulated a theory that reduced rhetoric to the management of argumentation and saw it in a binary relation to logic (Zappen 1991, 151). Bain accepted the significance of emotions for rhetorical composition but only after reducing emotions to mechanical descriptions of psychological and physical phenomena. In other words, debate in the context of New Zealand rhetorical theory was regarded as a highly

analytical and scientific endeavour. As a consequence, exposition was palpably excluded from Whately's canon. Bain likewise jettisoned exposition (along with oratory, description and narration) as an outdated rhetorical system. Debate as the sphere of creative explanation and the invention of arguments lost its eminence in rhetorical theory. As a consequence, it gradually required an audience well-versed in the systematic routine of public speaking, advocacy and logical thought. Furthermore, listeners had to be able to appreciate the quality of logical style, that is, the correct application of norms. Especially, by the end of the century, debates were evaluated on the basis of soundness of argument and pureness of composition.

### **The City and the College: An Audience of Active Men and Fashionable Women**

In their attempt to create a culture of *esprit de corps*, students at the New Zealand colleges identified the college as an isolated institution within the colonial city. Auckland, Christchurch and Dunedin promoted their colleges as prestigious institutions and left the development of student culture on its own. The result was a gradual separation of city and college. At the founding of the universities, the relation between the wider and the academic public was relatively undefined. Towards the end of the century, the partition of city and college was complete.<sup>26</sup> The common prejudice that the universities actually welcomed this separation dominated students' and urban discussions. The colleges were perceived as training grounds for teachers, lawyers and other more technical professions. The image of the university was however more complicated than this. Morrell and Hall propose that "university education in New Zealand was first aimed at creating wide opportunities for study rather than at achieving a standard of excellence in the pursuit of learning and truth" (Morrell and Hall 1962, 223). Their statement obscures the fact that students and professors unrelentingly

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<sup>26</sup> Hight and Candy argue that, at Canterbury College, the annual inaugural lecture delivered by the professors of the college was an "important link between the College and the Community" until it was abandoned in 1885 (Hight and Candy 1927, 58).

referred to learning as the pursuit of truth even though they also acknowledged the importance of practical instruction. Contrary to Morrell and Hall's idea that the colleges were practically inclined institutions with limited regard for truth and a desire to attune their degrees to the demands of the colony, the beginnings of the colleges suggest a different conclusion. Colleges in New Zealand were struggling with objectives which were mainly dictated by the colonial and imperial government, the local communities and academic opinion abroad. Students had to position themselves as a close-knit group in the complex educational ideology of the colony and Empire. Their desire to precisely delineate membership and the sphere of influence for their societies corresponded to this search for belonging.

Students hardly ever hesitated to style themselves as an educated, literate and academic 'lot'. In retrospection, Oscar T.J. Alpers confessed that "our efforts ... to create a university atmosphere were rather absurd ...; but we at least were deeply in earnest about it all" (Alpers 1928, 52). In 1893, Howell confidently proclaimed: "here meet from day to day, to study under able professors, a number of young men and women; and these are 'ourselves'" (Howell 1893, 133). He maintained that it was not becoming in an ardent debater "only [to] be an interested listener, but to strive to cultivate in himself the time-honoured art of speaking" (133). The quality of a member of a debating audience was characterised by the reverence s/he showed in presenting and listening to speeches. Awareness of the requirements of membership became crucial. In 1900, the Auckland University College debating society carried a motion that distinguished between active and associate members on grounds of their readiness to speak: "Members shall be either active or associate. Active members shall be those who speak at least once a term. All others shall be associate members" (SCUA, *minute book*, 30 April 1900). As a consequence, this distinction carried administrative force and excluded associate members from voting on matters concerning the society.

Nineteenth-century debating membership, from the establishment of the societies, was always restrictive. Students created an audience that deliberately excluded non-academic citizens and even initially declined attendance of the majority of the student body. Canterbury debaters, for example, were not sure, when establishing their society, whether only matriculate students should be allowed to join. In 1923, Charles Chilton (1860-1929), professor of palaeontology and biology and a founding member of the Canterbury College Dialectic Society, recalled the complex discussion that resulted in the exclusion of non-matriculate students. Because the assembly could not arrive at a unanimous decision, the chairman had to give his casting vote. Chilton, in hindsight, argued that the matriculate students formed a closely knit community whereas the non-matriculated students were more or less floating members of the college and “had no such close bond of sympathy” (Chilton 1923, 10). In other words, the society enforced and acted within given parameters of belonging, which separated it from the public. As a consequence, the audience of these societies was a well-circumscribed and safe body of individuals who all shared the same foundation, that is, their college association. In 1882, the students at Otago University resolved that “the Society shall consist of students and ex-students of the university of Otago to be admitted without election and such members of other recognized universities as the society shall by ballot in the usual manner choose to admit” (Hocken, *minute book*, 23 June 1882). In 1884, debaters in Christchurch similarly permitted a limited number of honorary members to join the society. They thus extended their membership regulations only within accepted conventions.

The three colleges were founded to provide New Zealand’s education system with teachers who were desperately needed. Advancing the colony’s intellectual and academic life was only a secondary aim of the colleges. Hercock points out that “students of the AUC and their college did not form part of the day-to-day life of the

city, but hovered on its margins, emerging only occasionally into the public gaze” (Hercock 1994, 3). In her analysis of the student association in Auckland, Hercock nevertheless makes clear that students’ activities exhausted the possibilities of college life and extended beyond academic boundaries. In *A History of the University of Auckland*, Sinclair’s treatment of late-Victorian student activities acknowledges the significance of the University College for Auckland’s city life.<sup>27</sup> McAloon in his study of the Canterbury elite ascribes a pivotal role to Canterbury College in forming a close-knit body of men and women who shaped the public culture of Christchurch (McAloon 2000). In Dunedin, the University became part of urban culture through a number of scientific debates on Darwinism (Sullivan 2005; Stenhouse 1990, 1999: 69-71).

Thomas Bender, who studies the relationship of urban and intellectual culture in America, is an unremitting advocate of the history of the city. His ideas contextualise McAloon’s analysis of elite culture in Christchurch. Bender maintains that mid-nineteenth-century intellectual elitism did not remain at the outskirts of popular urban culture:

Elite cultures depended upon and extended popular culture. It was possible for intellectuals to speak to the pace of local thought and still address serious issues in a learned tradition that was at least vaguely familiar to their local community of auditors or readers. Yet this intellectual community was fragile. It was vulnerable to the changes in scale, the calculation and ambition, and the cultural diversity that emerged over the course of the nineteenth century. (Bender 1993, 11)

The educated elite, among it the students of New Zealand colleges, only shaped colonial realities because they were inseparably tied to them. Even though, as Bender argues, “neither personal knowledge nor clear social categories were available to organize and

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<sup>27</sup> One of the differences between Auckland and Canterbury and Otago was the former’s status as state university. In comparing Auckland with the United States, Sinclair observes that “the establishment of a state college was a recognition that the provision of higher education was a vital function of societies and of the view that the most suitable agency to provide this function was the state, not religious or private groups” (Sinclair 1983, 26). As a consequence, at least the governing body of the Auckland region acknowledged the need and their responsibility for a higher education institution. Graduation processions through Auckland physically brought college life to the city. They were introduced in 1900 and Sinclair records that the tradition was copied from Sydney (69). Canterbury students began their processions in 1899.

discipline intellectual life” (12), the educated classes in New Zealand created categories of audience and public on the basis of ideas, rituals and theories that were available to them.

All three colleges had matriculated as well as non-matriculate students. Matriculated students attempted to earn an academic degree. The wider public could attend classes depending on special interests and consequently formed the body of non-matriculate students, which in the formative years of the colleges constituted the larger part of the academic population. Non-matriculate students could not complete a specific academic programme. Auckland students were no exception:

By 1890, 147 students were attending lectures at the college: sixty-three men and eighty-four women. Around two thirds of these students had not passed the matriculation examination. Until they did so they could attend lectures and sit the college’s own ‘terms’ examinations, but could not take ‘finals’ which were marked in Britain, nor progress to degrees. (Hercock 1994, 4)

In other words, the college partly served as an institution for adult education. Moreover, all students, regardless of their enrolment status, had to earn a living unless they were fortunate enough to win one of the scholarships or exhibitions.<sup>28</sup> In 1902, Alpers and Irvine (themselves graduates from Canterbury College and members of the Dialectic Society) pointed out that the colleges were “‘popular’ institutions” recruiting their students mainly from the “lower and middle classes of the people” (Alpers and Irvine 1902, 379). In the early days, Canterbury College and Auckland University College taught evening classes to allow students to attend after their day’s work. Students were integral to the city’s civic and social life insofar as they actively contributed to its social and economic landscape. Contrary to Hercock, I maintain that students exerted an influence on urban life that was limited only by the small number of students (relative to

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<sup>28</sup> Scholarships and exhibitions usually meant extra examinations for applicants. The New Zealand University offered the University of New Zealand’s Junior (Entrance) Scholarships and the Senior Scholarships. Auckland University College, for example, created the Sinclair Scholarship for zoology and botany and the Gillies Scholarship in chemistry and physics (Sinclair 1983, 32). The Canterbury College Board established six Exhibitions worth £20 per annum (Gardner, Beardsley and Carter 1973, 140).

the overall urban population in New Zealand) and not by their affiliation to an academic institution. Instead, their status as educated and professionally trained individuals granted them access to the highest political offices that the colony had to offer. It enabled students like Apirana Ngata and Kate Edger, despite common prejudice, to direct the public policies of New Zealand in the early twentieth century.<sup>29</sup>

Eyewitness accounts relate that the Christchurch community was at odds with the college. In an interview of 1961, Professor Wall (1869-1966) states that “the university was always a bit of a mystery to the community. There was very little contact between the university and the townspeople” (Wall Interview, Gardner Papers, 4). L. P. Symes (1879-?), a laboratory assistant in 1894, confirms Arnold Wall’s opinion:

There was never a very close relationship between the university and the community. Individually university people had their own circle of friends and there was a good deal of criticism of ‘the product of Canterbury College.’ The university was really only a school for teachers. (Symes Interview, Gardner Papers, 3)

The colony, especially in the 1870s, needed teachers. Bowen’s Education Act of 1877 prompted parents to enrol their children at schools in unprecedented numbers. Between 1875 and 1886, special regulations of the University of New Zealand allowed school-teachers to directly proceed to B.A. examinations without previous enrolment (Beaglehole 1937, 113).<sup>30</sup> A large number of graduates, especially women, were or

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<sup>29</sup> From 1905 to 1943, Sir Apirana Ngata occupied the Eastern Maori parliamentary seat. Between 1907 and 1908, he sat on the Native Land Commission together with chief justice Sir Robert Stout. In 1927, Ngata received the knighthood and the following year became native minister. In 1934 he resigned from cabinet. Stout, for example, completed his degree as one of the first students at Otago University. Between 1873 and 1875, he lectured law at the University College. In August 1875, he became the Caversham member of the House of Representatives. Under the George Grey government, he became attorney general and minister for lands and immigration. From 1899, he acted as chief justice until his retirement in 1926 and decided over 1,400 cases. Another outstanding reformer, George Hogben, formed the New Zealand Educational Institute and provided a professional organisation for New Zealand’s teachers. Kate Edger, later Evans, was the first woman to graduate in New Zealand. Throughout her career, she continued to exert an influence in the suffragist movement and through the founding of the Nelson College for Girls. During the First World War, Kate Evans worked for two years at the New Zealand Department of Education. Biographical information obtained from Sorrenson, Hamer, Roth, and Hughes, DNZB.

<sup>30</sup> Beaglehole reports that “teachers in affiliated institutions and ‘certified teachers of good repute, of at least five years standing,’ might on the recommendation of the Chancellor or Vice-Chancellor be admitted immediately to the final B.A. examination, without the regular nine terms’ study demanded of



became teachers. Morrell observes that at Otago, “in 1887, 68 out of a total of 167 University students were teachers” (Morrell 1969, 104).<sup>31</sup> These students exerted a considerable influence on the next generation of New Zealanders. Even if their immediate impact on the wider public as students can be considered small and occasionally even unwanted; their effect on New Zealand education as professionals was significant. In 1901, the article *College and Culture* proposed that “an up-to-date College, jarring though the thing and its name may be to those conscious of older ideals, is no longer a scarcely tolerated intrusion, but is become an element in the content of the public demand” (*CCR*, June 1901, 6). In 1902, an anonymous writer in the same review contended that “the society referred to is one link between the academic life of a student and that outer, larger world in which he ought to take a useful place when his collegiate course is complete” (*CCR*, June 1902, 22). Students noticed changes in public perception and were also aware of their influence on public opinion. Helen Connon (1859/1860? – 1903), for example, became principal of Christchurch Girls High School. Her sisters were assistant teachers under her supervision.<sup>32</sup> Caroline Freeman (1855/1856? – 1914) opened Girton College in Dunedin and later another school under

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others. (Beaglehole 1937, 113). He concludes that “[t]eachers, clearly, were able to acquire degrees on easier terms than the ordinary student” (128-9).

<sup>31</sup> Towards the end of the century, these numbers were decreasing: “in 1901, out of a roll of 237, there were ‘not more than 25, including pupil-teachers, Training College students and teachers engaged in public school work’” (Morell 1969, 104). As a consequence, Otago University’s curriculum began to accommodate the practical needs of teachers. In 1904, Education, under the influence of George Hogben, became a academic course in its own right (*ibid.*). In the case of Auckland University College, Sinclair makes clear that an equally high numbers of students came from the Teachers’ Training College (Sinclair 1983, 33). He compares New Zealand with British higher education and observes that “British civic universities were mere vestibules of the teaching profession, mere machines producing graduates with qualifications which would enable them to earn a living. In a New Zealand or a British context it could, of course, have been contended that this situation showed that the universities were relating to, and in this way satisfying the needs of, their local communities” (*ibid.*).

<sup>32</sup> Helen Connon was born in Australia but her parents emigrated to New Zealand only four years after Helen was born. In Dunedin, Helen was tutored by the young Robert Stout. In Hokitika she was allowed to enrol at the local boy’s school. In 1874, the family moved to Christchurch and Helen became the first women to enrol at Canterbury College. In 1881, she graduated with an M.A. with first-class honours and became the first women in the British Empire to win a degree with honours. In 1882, she accepted the post of lady principal at Christchurch’s Girls’ High School. She promoted scientific education alongside physical tuition. She continued to work as principal even after her marriage to Macmillan Brown in 1886. Eight years later, she resigned from her post. The biographical sketch is based on Lovell-Smith 2004, Hankin, DNZB.

the same name in Christchurch.<sup>33</sup> Even besides these very prominent examples, there are numerous intriguing stories. James Hendry of the Dunedin debating society began to work for the education office in Invercargill (*TPNZI* 1889, 572). Charles Thomas, after graduation eventually became assistant master at St. John's College, Auckland. He served in the South African War and on his return, taught at Nelson College and finally became headmaster of King's College in Auckland. Page, in her detailed study of the first women graduates at Otago University, shows that most of the fifty-eight graduates worked as teachers and principles in one of New Zealand's girls schools (Page 1992). The didactic focus of Bain's and Whately's texts on rhetoric and composition possibly created points of reference for these future teachers. With regard to this high turnout of teachers, debate was practically applied rhetorical didacticism and as such a desirable addition to the otherwise highly theoretical teachings at the colonial colleges in New Zealand.

The public significance of students' later professions did not stop at education. Many male students, like Oscar T.J. Alpers (1867-1927), pursued a career in the legal profession, in which deliberation and advocacy were important assets.<sup>34</sup> Students went

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<sup>33</sup> In 1858, the family of Caroline Freeman came from England to New Zealand. During 1873 and 1877, she taught at Caversham School in Dunedin. The principal at Caversham encouraged Caroline to pursue higher education and, in 1878, she became the first matriculated woman to enrol at Otago University. Her schedule as a student was overwhelming as she walked seven miles home after the lectures. Professor Sale added to the strenuous situation with open hostility towards female students. In 1881, Caroline Freeman passed the B.A. examination. Her success in New Zealand's higher education system was marked by her lack of a structure secondary education. The biographical sketch is based on Page, DNZB and 1992, and Gough, *Notable Girls' Schools*, manuscript CPL.

<sup>34</sup> Oscar Thorwald Johan Alpers was one of the early members of the society and possibly John Macmillan Brown's most prominent student. In the absence of the professor, Alpers substituted for his teacher. Coming to New Zealand as the son of Danish immigrants, Alpers did not speak a word of English and faced significant challenges in obtaining a tertiary education. Before attending the Christchurch Training College and Canterbury College in 1884, he had already taught his own night-classes and had been a teacher at various district schools. In 1887, he graduated from Canterbury College with a B.A. only to obtain an M.A. in 1889. While in Christchurch, Alpers contributed several satirical articles to the *Press*. Arnold Wall recalled that this involvement might have prevented Alpers from succeeding Prof. Brown to the chair of English. In 1903, he completed his LLB degree and subsequently joined the legal profession. During his career, he served as judge of the Supreme Court. In his later life, he was an ardent speaker, engaged in public debate and continued the acting he had started at an early age. Among the books he published are *The Jubilee Books of Canterbury Rhymes* (1900), *The Progress of New Zealand in the Nineteenth Century* (1902), *College Rhymes* (1923) and his final biographical work *Cheerful Yesterdays* (1928).

into parliament and became successful politicians, a domain of discursive engagement that collegiate debate strove to imitate. Sir Apirana Ngata, for example, was a member of the Canterbury College as well as the Auckland University debating society. Frederick E. Baume (1862-1910) became one of Auckland's most eloquent politicians. Others later began to capture public attention as artists: William H. Montgomery (1866-1958) after studying for the Bar in Oxford became an artist in his own right in New Zealand, as did Charles Frederick Goldie (1870-1947). All of them were university students and members of debating societies.

Lillian Harriet Williams, like Arnold Wall and L.P. Symes, remembered that the community perceived the university as an institution that had little if nothing to do with the town: "It was very proud of Misses Connon and Edger, but in the main I feel that it thought going to university was a rather faddy, although harmless, sort of thing" (Blythe Interview, Gardner Papers, 5). Bender in his work on American intellectuals and the city suggests that at the end of the nineteenth century, clear points of reference for the assessment of intellectual institutions were missing: "Neither personal knowledge nor clear social categories were available to organize and discipline intellectual life. Intellectual distinctions were blurred, and the identity of audiences became rather diffuse" (Bender 1993, 12). Given that Canterbury College was tolerated rather than wholeheartedly accepted, students' cultural initiatives like the yearly concerts and drama productions became an integral part of the city's cultural life. Social activities, rational recreation and outstanding individuals enabled the urban New Zealand population to relate to the college and find grounds for approving the intellectual training there.

In 1882, the debating society at Canterbury College produced its first play "Much Ado about Nothing." The performance received wide public attention and resulted in an

invitation to the International Exhibition in Christchurch the same year.<sup>35</sup> The students were meant to perform “in the presence of the ministers and members of both Houses of Parliament” (MBL, *minute book*, 17 June 1882). However, students declined the offer because they “were not disposed to take part in so public a programme” (ibid.). At Otago University Professor Brown’s suggestion to hold a public debate was welcomed by members. His motion was opposed only by one vote (Hocken, *minute book*, 4 July 1884). Dunedin’s citizens were generally interested and supportive of the idea. The endeavour still had to be abandoned on financial grounds (Hocken, *minute book*, 25 July 1884). Public interest in the programme of the debating societies was sustained in subsequent years. In 1889, the Canterbury Dialectic Society had to limit the number of concert tickets because the community had, over the years, shown an interest in the private event that exceeded the actual seating capacity of the Great Hall (MBL, *minute book*, 12 Oct. 1889). The following year, the society introduced a rule restricting visitors at the general meetings because the Mathematical Lecture room proved too small (ibid., 11 Oct. 1890). The societies in Christchurch and Dunedin, even though largely composed of students, nevertheless entertained people outside the collegiate boundaries. Rational amusement proved to be a powerful means to make transparent the proceedings of collegiate societies.

The flexible relation of intellectual sphere and urban life in New Zealand paralleled an American development approximately thirty years earlier.<sup>36</sup> Thomas Bender in his

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<sup>35</sup> The Exhibition was a private venture by Jules Joubert and R.E.N. Twopeny. The Christchurch City Library records for its picture collection of the Exhibition that “temporary buildings were erected in Hagley Park to house the exhibits that had been gathered from various countries. The Exhibition ran for 14 weeks and attracted crowds of 226,000 between April and July 1882. (Christchurch City Library, Heritage Photograph Collection 2008)

<sup>36</sup> In *The University and the City* Bender and his colleagues show that these dynamics are discernable in nineteenth-century European and American cultures to different degrees. The volume provides an excellent overview of Bender’s project. In the same volume, Louise L. Stevenson investigates the relationship of city and university in New York. She suggests that “[i]n the college’s classical curriculum and extracurriculum of literary-society debates and independently pursued activities, students found an entryway into the newly forming middle class” (Stevenson 1988, 151). Recently, Bender explored the conceptual basis of the city as an urban space. His and Cinar’s arguments inform an interpretation of the

study of intellectualism and the American city identifies the fundamental traits of the mid-nineteenth-century transformations:

Knowledge and competence increasingly developed out of the internal dynamics of esoteric disciplines rather than within the context of shared perceptions of public needs. This is not to say that professionalized disciplines or the modern service professions that imitated them became socially irresponsible. But their contributions to society began to flow from their own self-definitions rather than from the reciprocal engagement with general public discourse. (Bender 1993, 10)

Bender explicitly states that the city as a social structure no longer “provided an effective audience” (11). In other words, the discourse that students and academic professionals could offer to townspeople differed widely from what the city expected from the college. The role of the responsible intellectual that was embedded in her community was replaced by a more distanced scholar who was occupied with creating and claiming a professional niche.<sup>37</sup>

Women in New Zealand still had to claim their professional space. They were however exemplary of all that was innovative in debating at the end of the nineteenth century. Reviews of their conduct mirrored students’ ability to accept new forms of rhetorical practice and as a consequence, the emergence of an audience that necessarily differed from ideal concepts. Female debaters made the debating audience unpredictable. Women, because they were perceived as exotic appearances on the debating and oratorical platform, very often drew the attention of the wider public. Their appearance established—like debating tournaments—a link between the local

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relation of intellectual sphere and city. Cinar and Bender illustrate that the “urban experience” is “an ongoing contest over terrain”—physical as well as economic and intellectual—“[t]he result is the constant making and remaking of urban culture as local, private, or public concerns are brought to the broader terrain of public culture” (Cinar and Bender 2007, xvi). Davison deals with the function of public celebrations for urban colonial life in New Zealand, Australia and the United States and thus places urban colonial culture in the context of “remaking” urban spaces, but his study remains confined to the boundaries of nation-state (Davison 1990). Placed in this context, nineteenth-century New Zealand urban spaces were constantly remodelled by the intellectual elite in its relation to the urban population. As a consequence, the relation of the student body and the public only revealed trends of perception that were constantly changing.

<sup>37</sup> Debating societies in New Zealand were recurrently discussing the university curriculum, weighing arguments for and against the arts or sciences. Chapter five analysis this aspect of New Zealand’s educational discourse.

population and the collegiate sphere. They were admired, like Helen Connon, mocked, like Miss Randle or, like Miss Montgomery, simply accepted as exceptions to a rule.<sup>38</sup>

Women, even though slowly and frequently confronted with ignorance and prejudice, eventually claimed the debating platform as partners in deliberation alongside men. Women in Dunedin and Christchurch debated alongside men and from the very start of the societies addressed women-related issues.<sup>39</sup> As early as 1887, the year of the founding of the Auckland society, Miss Gifford and Miss Shrewsbury argued whether the “franchise should be granted to women” (SCUA, *minute book*, 7 Oct. 1887), a debate that was decided in favour of extending the franchise.<sup>40</sup> Part of the early engagement of women in debate was the genuine attitude that “the mere presence of women, would automatically effect some reform in the male character” (Phillips 1996, 52). In 1898, for example, the *Otago University Review* marvelled at the effect that women’s presence had on the general mood and conduct of an audience: “The influence of ladies always puts one in mind of Epps’s Cocoa, advertisements – grateful and comforting” (*OUR*, May 1898, 20). Scepticism concerning the oratorical and

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<sup>38</sup> Murphy, for example, traces this “rule” in non-canonical literary texts of the late-Victorian era. Her analysis makes clear that the image of women was to a large extent moulded by scientific public discourse. Women’s higher education and their participation in the public sphere were characterised by a supposedly scientific contemplation of their emotional rather than rational dispositions and intellectual capacities. Murphy shows that late-Victorian scientific discourse buttressed the traditional confinement of women to the private sphere. (Murphy 2006)

<sup>39</sup> Hercock’s analysis of the Auckland University debating society contains correct points of reference but also a number of false comments. She, for example, states that in 1910 an oratorical contest was added to the programme (Hercock 1994, 19). The idea of a prize for best orator was introduced by Dr. Posnett who actually inspired the founding of the society. The Auckland University Calendar of 1888 announces on the first page that the “Gold Medal for Oratory,” which in 1887 was awarded to Mr. Poland. Likewise, the introduction of parliamentary debates does not date back to 1910. The minute book of 1906 shows an entry that mentions “annual Parliamentary Debates.” As early as 1898, the *NZH* reports an “open evening” that took the form of a mock election of parliamentary candidates (*NZH*, 11 March 1898, 4). I do not agree with Hercock’s conclusion that the Auckland debating society was gravely biased against women. In 1887, Miss Shrewsbury was one of the most active debaters in the society and Miss Gorrie was also elected to the executive committee from its earliest beginnings. In 1891, Miss C. D. Grant became vice-president of the society. Women in Christchurch had to wait for several years before they were elected to these positions. Even though the number of female members might have been small in Auckland, this alone should not lead to the conclusion that men caused this development.

<sup>40</sup> Hercock maintains that “it was not until July 1911 that women were given a debate of their own, when they argued with the aid of two men speakers ‘That the Rose should take precedence of the Cabbage’, a proposal which, unsurprisingly, enticed only a ‘fair’ audience”. (Hercock 1994, 19) Hercock’s statement fails to mention these earlier women debates.

argumentative abilities of women persisted; but satire made way for acceptance because of women's unrelenting efforts to conquer the rhetorical space that was available to them. In 1892, the *New Zealand Herald* published an account of a debating evening at the Auckland University Debating Society, in which the chairman of the meeting regretted the "departure of Miss Grant for Wanganui" and without irony called for "a vote of thanks ... to that young lady for the many valuable services that she has rendered the Society and the University" (*NZH*, 17 June 1892, 5).

Newspapers found the attendance of women on debating evenings always worth mentioning. As early as 1879, the *ODT* reported on Caroline Freeman's Bowen prize essay. She delivered it in front of "a large audience, mostly ladies" and "remarked, before reading her essay, that she considered the mere fact of standing where she did to be a mark of advance of the age; and thanked the students generally for tolerating women in their ranks" (*ODT*, 7 June 1879, 2). Despite an openly professed disregard for women's higher education at Otago University, Freeman's comments allowed the Dunedin public to feel good about their innovative academic institution. In August 1888, the *New Zealand Herald* explicitly recalled "that the lady members of the society mustered strongly" (*NZH*, 11 Aug. 1888, 5). The author of *The Commemorative Issue* of the *Otago Review* resolved that "the adjective 'fashionable' is specially to be noted because it imports that there were a large number of ladies present" (*OUR*, Comm. Issue 1893, 35). Women excited the interests of the wider public because their position in the late nineteenth-century rhetorical culture was still ambiguous.

Women's passivity in deliberation was very often subject of criticism in university *Reviews*. Howell in "Ourselves" dismissed the women's silence by emphasising other female virtues:

Let the ladies, too, consider my words. What a power they might exercise in our society if they would break their long-preserved silence! How we would rejoice to hear the liquid sweetness of their melting voices. ... Theirs, too, is the greatest

share in providing the melody that enlivens our meetings, that soothes our troubles spirits, and strikes the chord of harmony in our souls. (Howell 1893, 135)

In 1890, the president of the Dialectic Society expressed the desire “that the lady members should continue to speak at the meetings of the society” (MBL, *minute book*, 31 May 1890). The same evening, Miss Rendall read an essay on Robert Browning. In 1903, the secretary of Auckland debating society remarked, possibly without fully noticing the irony of his statement, that “[i]t is regrettable that the ladies do not speak more often at the debates, although they attend well, and recently most hospitably come forward very often by entertaining the other members at supper” (*Marte Nostro*, Oct 1903, 8).

Women were far from being impassive about these comments. Where opportunities were lacking, women created their own platforms. Female students at Canterbury College published their own remarks on their fellow students’ in the “Cloak-Room Notes.” Women at Otago University did the same in the “Ladies Notes.” In 1898, the Cloak-Room Notes published the following reply to the relentless criticism of women’s lacking debating skills:

Again, at the present stage of advancement, it is curious to hear it said that women will not add ‘brilliancy’ to the debates. For even those that are most forward to exult in the supremacy of a man’s intellectual strength over a woman’s, for the most part allow this: that a women’s intellect is characterised by a certain quickness and a certain grasp of details that a man’s intellect lacks. (*OUR*, Sep. 1898, 115)

In Auckland, Mona M. Brown, Marion Metcalfe<sup>41</sup>, Winifred Scott and Marjorie McMaster initiated the student magazine *Marte Nostro*.<sup>42</sup> Occasionally, men proposed changes to debating procedures that were meant to promote female participation. In

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<sup>41</sup> Metcalfe and Brown were members of the debating society. Metcalfe took an active part in an impromptu debate of 1902.

<sup>42</sup> Sinclair records that “in 1903 a squabble between the women and men hockey players led to the establishment of a new journal. The women already had a club, the A.U.C. Hockey Club, with Lady Ranfurly as Patron. Now the men started what was said to be the first men’s hockey team in Auckland and demanded the right to the ladies’ club’s names. The women were indignant and refused ... The women, the so-called ‘militants’, then decided to start another journal, run entirely by themselves, and elected a female committee” (Sinclair 1983, 66).



1891, the recently married Joseph Penfound Grossmann (his wife was the New Zealand writer and feminist Edith Searle Grossmann) suggested that the constitution should be altered to allow for two lady members on the Society's committee.<sup>43</sup> He argued that the number of women participating was steadily increasing and that this fact should be acknowledged accordingly. The motion was carried and the Christchurch debaters thereafter elected two women to the executive.

Emma Hilda Keane (1873-1970), a member of the Auckland University debating society, helped to establish the Girls' Korero Club which encouraged debating and writing among women.<sup>44</sup> It is impossible to trace the reasons for this particular choice of name. Possibly, the Grey Maori myth was not the first incentive for female debaters to adopt a Maori term. Tony Ballantyne counts *korero* in Maori culture among the "combative forms of historical consciousness that encapsulate the competitive spirit at the heart of kin-group dynamics" (Ballantyne 2002, 150). It seems likely, that white female students drew on these implications to emphasise their intention to separate their activities from their male fellow debaters. The club attracted the attention of the *New Zealand Herald*, which published accounts of the meetings. Several members of the

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<sup>43</sup> Grossmann was the only New Zealand graduate with triple honours (English, Latin, political science and mental science). He was later notoriously known for being found guilty of fraud in 1898, among the injured parties were Prof. Haslam at Canterbury College and Thomas Scholfield Foster. Between 1896 and 1898 he was part-time lecturer in English at Canterbury College. Later, he took up a teaching position in Auckland and became professor of mental science, economics (1906-1926), history (1906-1932) and commercial geography (1906-1920). In 1932, he was eventually dismissed from his professorship. Sinclair writes of Grossmann: "Grossmann was a remarkable man. He had been first president of the Students' Association at Canterbury and a prominent rugby player. He was for many years one of the best tennis players in Auckland. He was good looking. He had quite extraordinary charm, and a magnetic personality" (Sinclair 1983, 80). During his time in Christchurch, he remained an active member of the debating society. Between 1885 and 1894 he delivered at least seven papers. In 1894, he also reviewed the prize essays. Once settled in Auckland, he published numerous articles in the *Star*. The biographical account is based on Sinclair 1983, 79-84; Grossmann, manuscript, MBL, 5 May 1894; Hight 1927, 72.

<sup>44</sup> Keane was born in Auckland. After graduating from Auckland University College, she briefly taught in Dunedin where she attended additional lectures at Otago University. In 1899, she began to publish articles in the *New Zealand Herald*. In 1902, she returned from the South Island to Auckland to become assistant editor at the *New Zealand Illustrated Magazine*. During her career as journalist, she contributed extensively to overseas magazines and journals like the *New York Sun*, *Britannia*, *National Review* and *Empire Review*. She also joined the London Lyceum Club, founded by Edith Searle Grossmann. Keane became one of the most successful female journalists of New Zealand. The information is based on McCallum, DNZB.

Korero nevertheless were also active in the university's debating society. Since 1899, the women held annual debating contest with the Auckland University debating society.

From time to time, women claimed the attention of not only the collegiate listeners but a wider audience in quite a different way. In 1878 in Dunedin, the first woman presenting a literary essay in public came from the university debating society.

The essayist was Miss Montgomery, the subject, 'Thackeray,' and the delivery of the essay was the first occasion in which a lady had appeared in public in this city in such a character. One or two lecturers had been heard in Dunedin before – one an immigration agent, and one a revivalist preacher – but Miss Montgomery was the first to adopt the *role* of an essayist in literature. The meeting was largely attended by the outside public, and caused some little stir in the then contracted literary circle of the town. (*OUR*, Comm. Issue 1893, 42)

The evening attracted an audience "outside" the typical realm of collegiate debaters.<sup>45</sup>

Miss Montgomery's presentation mirrored the later incident of 1898 of Miss Randle's brave encounter on the debating platform. Both women caused irritation among the male-dominated audience. Miss Randle in particular elicited the expression of prejudice regarding female social behaviour that, in 1898, should no longer have been appropriate. Miss Montgomery by contrast crossed these social and public borders by embracing the opportunity that the debating society provided. In other cases, female debaters were oblivious of the position to which they were confined. In 1881, Helen Connon, the pride of Canterbury College and idol of many colonial women, participated

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<sup>45</sup> Miss Montgomery's appearance was not the last event when women excited the attention of "outsiders". Bradshaw in *New Zealand of To-Day* related an incident for the B.A. examination that urged him to confess his personal view on women's higher education. *Adelphi* and *Heauton-timoroumenos* by Terence were placed on the canon for the B.A. at Canterbury College and this offended some "who were jealous for the modesty of the female students, which the plays were said to outrage" (Bradshaw 1888, 324). In particular, the YMCA appealed to the Canterbury Board of Governors to remove the books. Bradshaw maintained that the books should have remained on the list. He commented on the entire affair: "And for what reason? That a few young women, most of whom had far better be learning how to manage their future households, may dabble in partial truth side by side with students of the opposite sex" (325-6). He maintained that deciding against the plays would have been to decide against the truth and instruction of history: "History cannot be made other than it is; and from history men gather experience" (325). In other words, women's higher education and the moral issues related to it stood in the way of objectivity and factual historical knowledge. Bradshaw essentially argued that women's presence at college, under the given circumstances, corrupted the validity of academic knowledge. Beaglehole and Roth recall the same incident without Bradshaw's sentiment (Beaglehole 1937, 160 n49; Roth 1952, 33).

in a debate on women's higher education. Edith Searle Grossman (1863-1931)<sup>46</sup>, in her biography of Helen Connon, described her impressions of the incident:

In 1881 she led a debate in the Students' Dialectic Society on behalf of the higher education of women, but she trusted entirely to setting forth the reasons logically before the audience, under the very erroneous impression that they wished to know the facts and the justice of the case. The debate was lost, and it seems that she resolved not to argue but to try to use her own life as an example. (Grossman in Baxter 1981, 15f)

Grossman's statement was coloured by her own feminist background. Debating for women could be a frustrating experience given their fellow debaters' condescension. Female debaters, if they voiced their opinion, were still regarded as obscure variations on the norm of public speaking. Their exceptional status often transformed their public appearances into a performance or spectacle that attracted academic audience and urban outsiders. Women, because of their status, brought together town and academe. In other words, women debaters experienced *par excellence* what Bitzer describes as constraints in a rhetorical situation. As a consequence, women became an indispensable part of the formation of a debating audience because they had to transcend the traditional limitations of the rhetorical culture of their time.

## Conclusion

New Zealand students formed an active debating audience that was representative of the white intellectual elite of late-Victorian New Zealand. Membership was strictly regulated and exclusionary. Intellectual refinement was regarded as one of the entry conditions and the requirement of active participation was meant to prevent the lowering of debating standards. Their records suggest that they adopted regulatory

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<sup>46</sup> Edith Searle was originally born in Australia. In 1878, her family emigrated to New Zealand. At Christchurch's Girls' High School, under the tutelage of Helen Connon, she became head girl. A junior scholarship enabled her in 1880 to take up her studies at Canterbury College. In 1885, she graduated with an M.A. She married Joseph Penfound Grossmann and taught at Wellington Girls' High until 1890. In 1897, she tutored university classes. Eventually, she settled down in Europe, away from her husband, and pursued her writing career. Between 1890 and 1910, she published four novels. Feminist ideas permeated her novels. She was a founding member of the London Lyceum Club and the Women's Institute in Christchurch. The biographical information taken from Moffat, manuscript, 2007; Stafford 2006, 171-200; Robert 2006.

frameworks that were traditionally associated with the founding of clubs and societies in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Furthermore, collegiate debating societies were confronted with a division between university and city, which created boundaries that were transcended by means of extraordinary appearances of women on stage or the disrupting behaviour of the Barrackers' Brigade.

The audience in New Zealand debates was envisaged as an ideal and universal entity (parallel to Perelman's universal audience) and was practically influenced by notions of the literary audience, the rise of the mass audience and such derogatory terms like hooligan. At the same time, student audiences were partly composed of members of "counter-publics" like women and Maori students. Within this paradigm, debating generated an "emancipatory potential" (Fraser 1992, 124) because it was not only an exercise of rational deliberation but a display and even spectacle for an audience. With the flexibility of participants came the danger of compromising debating standards and reducing the quality of the debaters' audience.

Students had to relate to this reality and could not exclude the fact that "the mob" was among them. Their reaction varied, but in general, rowdies were met with contempt. Truth and intellect were always on the side of attentive listeners:

On many subjects of possible discussion the agile mind is not so safe a guide as the somewhat sluggish; and it is often the case that what fails to appeal to the 'healthy stupidity' of the mass of men has, however plausibly it may be set forth, lost the heart of truth which alone can give it power. The danger of ease in debating power leading to artificial refinements in argument and to love of overcoming without a single eye for the truth, is a serious one. There are few things more hurtful to character and more likely to lessen one's public influence than the spirit of the professional debater. Fortunately, we are in some measure protected by a body of students who do not aid the Society directly, but who give scant encouragement to the over-refinements of irresponsible intellectual free-lances. (*OUR*, June 1898, 39)

The debating audience had to aspire to a standard that was worthy of their status as an educated group. They could only protect the society from the ignorance of the masses if, among them, they found representatives of this class. In the course of determining what

differentiated them from the rest of the public, they eventually came back to the traditional values of truth and refinement. Authenticity of character, purity of style, emotional stability, acute reason and voluntary participation were the characteristics of a brilliant debater and her audience. Laziness, ignorance, blindness to reason and vulgarity defined the other end of the extreme. Thus, to be part of a debating audience carried a status that propelled the individual to loftier heights of knowledge and wisdom.

John Durham Peters, in his criticism of Habermas's project, propounds the argument that "[i]deals of participatory democracy often go together with a distrust of aesthetic representation ... Habermas prizes conversation, reading and plain speech as worthy forms of discourse for a democratic culture and is frankly hostile to theatre, courtly forms, ceremony, the visual, and to rhetoric more generally" (Peters 1993, 562). Even though Peters is right in pointing out Habermas's bias, late nineteenth-century New Zealand debating illustrates the dynamics of integration, however painful and limited they were. The debating audience at New Zealand colleges epitomises a compromise of participation that calls into question established notions of processes of integration and separation. In particular, popular forms of competition and entertainment expanded the scope of tolerance on the part of those who set the standards. Debating societies admittedly cultivated a routine of seclusion. At the same time, in the safe environment of their clubs, students were bound to recur to practices of integration to sustain debating as a collegiate practice. While norms of participation became flexible, the actual argumentation and its procedural routine came under the influence of a regime of political communication that controlled public discourse rather than embraced the participatory liberty that debating societies practised.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Dialectic Responsibility**

#### **Debate as a Rescue Mission**

##### **Introduction**

Audience participation in nineteenth-century New Zealand debate was an issue of control and regulation. The actual procedure of argumentation, dialectic, paralleled this trend. The idea of dialectic in New Zealand was predominantly influenced by its opposition to rhetoric, Matthew Arnold's concept of "conduct" and the late-Victorian belief in the Darwinian principle of selection. Students extended this theoretical framework in the practice of debate. Adherence to a debating protocol was thought to produce secure knowledge, certainty of opinion and to preserve the best social behaviour among students. Collegiate debate in New Zealand was believed to create a setting of secure social interaction because it warded off arbitrariness of conduct by coherence with the laws of nature. Control was also exerted on the level of argumentation. Exchange of arguments was conducted on the basis of formal patterns of fairness under the regulatory influence of a vague concept of eloquence.

This chapter argues that student debate was marked by a strong desire for certainty that found its way into its organisation. Colonial circumstances were not exactly conducive to the creation of a sense of assurance. Natural conditions were often challenging. In 1886, the eruption of Mt. Tarawera illustrated the fickleness of New Zealand's landscape.<sup>1</sup> At the end of the nineteenth century, the Long Depression between 1885 and 1895 left its mark on colonial society.<sup>2</sup> Debating topics reflected these developments. The question of Australian Federation, for example, was essentially

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<sup>1</sup> Mt. Tarawera is close to Rotorua on the North Island of New Zealand. The Tarawera eruption lasted four days in June 1886 and was a geological event that drew the attention of the scientific as well as general public (Bradshaw 1888, 213-225). The eruption changed the appearance of the local landscape and demonstrated with unparalleled force, the unpredictability of New Zealand's natural environment.

<sup>2</sup> Mein Smith 2005, 93-99. Gardner and Belich ascribe the depression to the years between 1879 and 1895 (Gardner 1992, 75-86 and Belich 2001, 32-8).

designed around economic considerations and conducted in a way that left little room for contradicting positions and public involvement. Additionally, economic argumentation drew its force from a late-Victorian belief in the reliability of statistical data for the prediction of future developments. The combination of epistemological certainty and standards of argumentative engagement gave rise to a version of dialectic that transformed debate into a systematic performance of set procedures.

Initially, Habermas's work provides the backdrop for assessing the social dimension of the practice and theory of dialectic. Habermas favoured dialectic as an unbiased means of knowledge production. The second part examines the meaning of conduct on the basis of norms of natural selection. The dichotomy of dialectic and rhetoric in New Zealand is explored to account for the significance of eloquence in debate. Eloquence and conduct in turn gave rise to discursive norms that dominate the nineteenth-century New Zealand debates on Australian Federation.

### **Dialectic as “Dialogic Civility”<sup>3</sup>**

Nineteenth-century student debates and Habermas's *TCA* promote the primacy of dialectic over rhetoric. While rhetoric is observed with suspicion, dialectic is heralded as the true form of dialogic discourse because it provides a point of reference for Habermas's overall project of locating communication in a social context.<sup>4</sup> Habermas and nineteenth-century discourse on debate link the practice of dialectic to norms of communication and codes of conduct to check the corrupting influence of rhetoric and bring out the full force of dialectic. As a consequence, both descriptions of dialectical communication mistrust the nonrational in situations of deliberation. In order to grant rational components of communication full influence, procedures of debate are designed

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<sup>3</sup> The phrase is taken from Arnett's article on this concept (Arnett 2001).

<sup>4</sup> Krüger observes that Habermas “after all refers to the procedural concept of argumentation as ‘dialectic’ and wishes to make the procedural concept of communicative rationality the basis of his critique of society” (Krüger 1991, 145).

to lead directly to consensus-formation and knowledge production. In the following, Habermas meets nineteenth-century Professor Haslam and together they generate a model of dialectic that is informative of the way students were handling debating procedures. Additionally, Haslam's and Habermas's perspectives are expanded beyond the boundaries of rationality on the basis of what Arnett calls "dialogic civility" (Arnett 2001, 315), a metaphor "situated in embedded significant choice, relying upon invitation, not control" (317).

Habermas systematically explains how dialectic applies arguments to social reality and helps to negotiate different standpoints in communication. For Habermas, "argumentation as a *procedure*" is the realm of dialectic and "a form of interaction *subject to special rules*" (Habermas 1984, 25). Once again, Habermas's model is explicitly ideal and hypothetical. Accordingly, rules for argumentative procedures are based on a "hypothetical attitude" of language partners, who, for the moment, are free from strategic constraints, from "the pressure of action and experience" (ibid.). To engage in deliberation, participants in debate identify a claim and test "with reasons, and only reasons, whether the claim defended by the proponents rightfully stands or not" (ibid.). Habermas's model does not seek to explain how this ideal version of dialectic is applied to realistic situations of disagreement, but how, for example, the idea of universal audience fits into this version of "'procedural rationality' by which we [can] judge the legitimacy of procedures for argumentation, agreements and compromises" (Goode 2005, 62). In other words, Habermas attempts to provide a regulatory standard for discursive interaction because "ordinary languages are imperfect and do not ensure lack of ambiguity" (Habermas 1988, 150).<sup>5</sup> The point where

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<sup>5</sup> Habermas accepts the flawed state of communication and ascribes it to the fact that "consensus is, in principle, possible" and not "because reaching an understanding is, in principle, necessary" (Habermas 1988, 150). In other words, Habermas sees that discussions in practice are distorted because the regulative ideal of consensus is imposing standards on communication that it cannot meet. Nevertheless, consensus in real situations of debate is potentially possible as long as "the delicate balance between separation and



Habermas's project becomes problematic is when he promotes the procedural pattern of argumentation to the ranks of normative "ritualised competition for the better argument" (Habermas 1984, 26). Despite Habermas's insistence that languages are "inwardly porous" (Habermas 1988, 150), he insists that they can produce a universal normative standard that can then serve as a point of departure for ordinary use of argumentation. As a consequence, dialectic for Habermas functions as a "universally agreed-upon virtue system" (Arnett 2001, 319) that directs discursive behaviour.

In 1884, Francis Haslam at Canterbury College in a lecture to the Dialectic Society preferred dialectic to rhetoric as a means to secure standardised knowledge production in debate. Like Habermas, Haslam regarded dialectic as a reliable instrument to control deliberation. He aimed at impressing on his students the Greek idea of dialectic as a "rule of conduct" (Haslam 1884, 13). Most significantly, Haslam coupled dialectic with the "welfare of mankind" (23). In the tradition of Socrates, he assigned to dialectic a universal and regulatory role for the production of knowledge:

The mind of man, he [Sokrates] thought, naturally desired to discover not only what was good for you or me ... but what was good for mankind as a whole – what was eternally and unchangeably good, under all conditions and all circumstances. Otherwise, what footing has the mind of man better than the shifting sand. And this absolute good is only a form of absolute truth ... .  
(Haslam 1884, 11)

Haslam's argument came full circle when he concluded that the "one thing that we have learnt from Sokrates—that the search after truth, whether absolute or relative, is mainly valuable as a means whereby we may establish for ourselves and others, a rule of conduct. 'Conduct,' says Matthew Arnold, 'is three-fourths of life'" (32). The last quotation was possibly taken from Arnold's lecture "Literary and Science" (1883) delivered to an American audience and meant as a reply to Thomas H. Huxley's lecture

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union" of individuals and their language use is accepted. Nick Crossley recently examined Habermas's notion of "systematically distorted communication" (prevalent in *Knowledge and Human Interest*) and concluded that the concept eluded any definite understanding. Instead, it "remains overtly dependent upon a psychological frame of reference" (Crossley 2004, 89).

on “Science and Culture”.<sup>6</sup> Arnold’s writing remained ambivalent when tackling what he called the “instinct for intellect and knowledge” and “our sense of conduct” (Arnold 1885, 103). He commonly used the term conduct for what he termed behaviour or manners in other works. In *The Yale Manuscript* published in 1989, it becomes obvious that Arnold was struggling with the rigidity of his own faith and with what Haslam cited as the regulative ideal for dialectic.<sup>7</sup> *The Yale Manuscript* suggests that Arnold understood conduct as a result of self-control and striving towards calm and balance. Whatever Arnold’s precise understanding of the phrase, Haslam’s notion of “rules of conduct” was directly linked to an ideal in which dialectic’s “fitting place in our own lives” (Haslam 1884, 3) was that of education. Haslam maintained that “properly speaking, education [and dialectic] should be nothing else than the scheme of our lives” (ibid.). As a consequence, in 1884, Haslam developed dialectic as an educational means to create universal norms of conduct for the cultivation of human intellect and the production of knowledge.

Following the “discussion”, Habermas and Haslam believe in “universally unavoidable ‘presuppositions’ behind everyday language use” (Goode 2005, 64). Beyond this assumption, Haslam’s use of Arnold’s phrase suggests that nineteenth-century discourse on dialectic was influenced by an idea of democratic civility towards each other. The attempt to control debate was embellished by a notion of integration that Habermas’s concept captures only marginally. Arnett’s category of “dialogic civility” allows for more freedom in speech and reveals dynamics designed to “lessen

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<sup>6</sup> An earlier version of this address was published in *The Nineteenth Century* (August 1882) available to lecturers and students in New Zealand. The American version of the lecture was later published in the compilation *Discourses in America* (1885). Arnold identified instinct for conduct and beauty as the paramount faculties of human life that had to be addressed by the arts and natural sciences. Conduct and beauty secured civilisation in a liberal and humanist context.

<sup>7</sup> Arnold commented on his attempts to master his new found faith in behaviour in rather harsh terms: “By meditation & observation we attain a faith, & strike one day some good strokes in manners & behaviour: ha, say we, what a power conviction lends to our practice: the next day the nerves are wrong, the manners full of blunder & despicability, and the conviction, metamorphosed into consciousness, riding us like a nightmare. Nor is it true that after repeated failures, we stand” (Arnold 1989, 21).

fear in the public arena by giving diversity of ideas space within the public domain” (Arnett 2001, 328). As a result, the understanding of dialectic as control of discursive behaviour is enhanced by the suggestion that dialectic in nineteenth-century student debates also functioned as a mechanism of opportunity: that dialectic in debating societies created a “place of conversation that permits talking, requires listening, and invites reciprocal learning” (ibid.) where it was not permitted elsewhere.

### **Survival of the Fittest: Dialectic, Conduct and Nature**

Initially, the students’ colonial setting provided them with a sense of freedom in debate that mainly stemmed from their naivety in practising debate. This inexperience was later transformed by a desire to control discursive behaviour to check corrupting influences by creating elaborate codes of conduct. Fear of uncontrolled discussion was commonly justified by reference to natural laws and conditions. In particular, during the 1880s Darwinism influenced the discourse on intellectual improvement. Dialectic became coterminous with success in debate, the production of valid knowledge, codes of conduct and “harmony with nature”.

During the 1880s in New Zealand, Socratic dialectic with its “apostolic spirit” (Haslam 1884, 23) was regarded as the benchmark of debating.<sup>8</sup> Public involvement and a high-minded moral attitude were part of academic life and, as a consequence, part of collegiate debates. In 1878, students at Canterbury suspected rather than knew the connotations of the term “dialectic” when they adopted it as the name of their society. They nevertheless chose the term to mark the society’s unique standing.<sup>9</sup> Dialectic,

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<sup>8</sup> “This change in the direction of inquiry, leading as it did directly to an interest in the welfare of mankind interprets for us what has always seemed to me to be a most remarkable trait in the character of Sokrates and Plato. It accounts for what may be called their apostolic spirit. Up to their time men who imagined themselves to be possessed of knowledge greater than others has shewn no great desire to impart it, except insofar as it tended to their won glorification, or to the gratification of their born vanity to do so” (Haslam 1884, 23).

<sup>9</sup> In 1904, Charles Chilton recalled the circumstances that led to the adoption of the name: “A meeting was soon called, and it was unanimously decided that such a Society should be established forthwith; and

apart from its history, conveyed a sense of dignity and corresponded to a young colony's desire to establish lasting traditions. Students at Otago University similarly located their activities within the context of dialectic when employing terminology like "dialectic prowess" (*OUR*, Sept. 1901, 99). Students were convinced that skill in dialectic could be taught. In 1893, Howell in his prize essay recited the aims of the Otago University debating society: "to teach us by practice how to speak" and to "teach us to know, honour, and respect each other" (Howell 1893, 133). For students at New Zealand's colonial colleges, dialectic and conduct were, on the one hand, naturally given and, on the other, had to be advanced by careful training.

In 1884, Haslam was convinced that conduct was a historical concept that evolved in reciprocity to natural laws. For Haslam, conduct and dialectic were man's natural habitats: "[T]o admit that all rules of conduct, all conceptions of good, all distinctions between right and wrong are historical developments in obedience to certain laws, this is to put ourselves in harmony with nature" (Haslam 1884, 34). In other words, Haslam argued that man could identify natural laws that were applicable to the creation of discursive norms. Haslam's conviction that man could place himself "in harmony with nature" was based on the assumption that nature was something external, an entity that could be observed and taken apart. Dunlap shows that settlers in New Zealand "understood their lands within a universal system of knowledge, a system that assumed the human intellect could understand this world from the outside, as an object" (Dunlap 1999, 309). Nature, as it were, followed certain rules. According to Haslam, these rules needed to be adapted to meet the requirements of colonial life. A similar idea permeated colonial art. Mahar observes that landscape paintings were "valued as records of natural history" (Mahar 2005, 69) and "topographical landscapes ... implied the use-value of

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when one of the students who was studying Greek suggested the name 'Dialectic Society' it was readily agreed to as in harmony with the views of the founders, who were determined that theirs should be no common Debating Society – though probably the proportion of those who understood the exact meaning of the words was as small then as it is now" (Chilton 1923, 9).

the land through pictorial description” (68). Besides its apparent usefulness, “nature” in New Zealand acquired the status of a control mechanism for the intellectual characteristics of the colonial population.

While the connection of nature and its laws with the norms of social conduct remained fuzzy in Haslam’s lecture and Arnold’s writings, Professor Hutton at Canterbury College encountered little difficulties in seeing obvious connections between the two concepts. In 1882, in the opening lecture *Biology in our Arts Curriculum*, Hutton insisted that the principle of selection, in other words, evolution, should be the basis of the Arts curriculum in New Zealand.<sup>10</sup> Seen in an imperial context, Hutton’s and Haslam’s addresses represented the New Zealand version of Arnold’s and Huxley’s controversy in America and England. Hutton in the spirit of Darwinism argued that man differed from lower species in the ability to sympathise with other individuals. As a consequence, selection affected man in two spheres: sympathy and utility, the latter of which he shared with other species. Hutton followed the Darwinian theory of evolution when he observed: “By the action of selection through utility intelligence has been raised into intellect; by the action of selection through sympathy with our fellowmen, the moral sense has been developed, and ethical systems formed” (Hutton 1882, 101). The explanatory model that Hutton developed up to that point was based on familiar ground. Hutton then added a crucial social argument that elaborated his previous claim and extended the applicability of the theory of evolution: “through our sympathy with nature imagination has given birth to art; and our aesthetic faculties have been evolved by selection through the necessity for amusement, caused by the restless activity of the brain” (ibid.). Hutton was convinced

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<sup>10</sup> Hutton meant to clarify the significance of biology for politics, history and ethics and declared: “I shall do so by demonstrating the constant action in all human affairs of the principle of selection, which, as you know, is one of the leading principles of biology” (Hutton 1882, 97). Hutton’s lecture was part of a number of lectures that addressed the need to revise science-teaching in schools and at university. In particular, Hutton’s colleagues T. Jeffrey Parker and George M. Thomson supported Hutton in his claims (Parker 1883, 1885; Thomson 1882).

that the principle of selection could provide a scientific foundation for history and politics.<sup>11</sup> In the course of the lecture he discussed the idea that government by discussion provided the best long-term political form of representation because, according to natural selection, groups of animals needed “strength to resist enemies” and “flexibility of organisation” (103) to survive. Despotism was preferable in temporary bellicose situations; representative government was based on intellectual exchange, flexibility of opinion and designed for peaceful existence (104-5). From Hutton’s point of view, these two forms of government emerged in relation to the natural environment:

Nations inhabiting rich, warm countries, which produce abundance of food, would be envied by their neighbours; and consequently could never afford to give up despotism ... But nations living in the bleak north, on land of which no one wished to deprive them, would develop government by discussion; the struggle for live against unkindly nature would strengthen the body, and government by discussion would invigorate the intellect. (104)

If natural conditions were not conducive to the creation of an egalitarian administration, the cultivation of ideas and opinion could be furthered by education (101). In summary, processes of selection for man were, on the one hand, a natural given and, on the other, open to human intervention. Hutton in his lecture provided a framework that clarified the connection of human conduct and nature. In deciphering the laws of nature, men could master the selective processes s/he was exposed to through evolution. Hutton declared that “the principle of selection ... is everywhere; we cannot escape from its action” (Hutton 1882, 102). Most significantly, he concluded that in the Victorian era, people are “now conscious of it [the principle of selection], and hope, by the introduction of methodological intrinsic selection, hitherto unknown, to direct its

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<sup>11</sup> History as a science was a popular issue in late-Victorian debates. In 1882, for example, students at Canterbury aimed at clarifying the question: “Is history capable of being treated as a science, in the sense in which biology is a science?” (MBL, *minute book*, 6 May 1882). The chairman, Rev. Flavell, commented that “he considered there was truth on both sides: on the one hand it was becoming more and more recognized that certain laws could be detected in the facts of History. The method of studying History was becoming more philosophic; while on the other hand the exercise of human volition of free – will was constantly interfering with the operation of law in the sphere of human action” (ibid.).

movements” (105). In New Zealand’s intellectual discourse then, “harmony with nature” (Haslam 1884, 34) was not so much a passive mode of aesthetic appreciation of natural beauty, but an active mechanism for determining of man’s best chance of survival in nature. As man had to stem the tide of mental selection, Haslam’s promotion of dialectic as conduct was the answer to the newly discovered forces of evolution. In other words, students had a chance to contribute to the survival of the best intellectual qualities in New Zealand’s colonial society by adhering to codes of conduct in their interaction with each other.

Hutton’s and Haslam’s opinions permeated student discussion. In 1899, the prize essay in Dunedin dealt explicitly with “The Influence of Natural Conditions in New Zealand on the National Character” (*OUR*, Sep. 1899, 82). The essay proclaimed that biology proved that “the physical characteristics of a country, all make themselves felt, to some extent, in the temperament of its people” (*ibid.*). The author proceeded to investigate the influence of nature on the indigenous populations of America and New Zealand. He concluded that within a lengthy timeframe, the environment would be bound to have an impact on its inhabitants; however, New Zealanders did not have to fear exposure to these effects. This interesting synopsis was based on the observation that New Zealand was too similar to Great Britain to cause any lasting alterations in the virtuous qualities of its colonisers:

We are still Britons; and many centuries, at least, must elapse before ancestral predisposition gives place to environment as the paramount influence determining national character. This would be so even were the change of circumstances severe. From Great Britain to New Zealand the change is not at all severe, especially in climate, which is calculated to most strongly affected racial disposition; and the great characteristics of the Anglo-Saxons will always be exhibited by the people of this colony. (*OUR*, Sep. 1899, 84)

As a civilised race in a young colony, the author held that the “estrangement from Nature which exists here must be trivial in comparison with the state of affairs in the large cities of the Old Country” (85). In other words, even though New Zealanders were

still part of the Anglo-Saxon race, their close proximity to untamed nature allowed them a considerable advantage compared to their cousins in England. The influence was of such a quality that New Zealanders could develop a more practical intellect and produce applicable rather than theoretical knowledge:

[I]t must be remembered that the intellect, besides being primarily a means to an end, may be regarded to some extent as an end in itself. The faculty of generalisation and deduction is commonly looked upon by metaphysicians as that which differentiates the mind of man from that of the brutes, and as the highest and best phase of thought. This is just; but perfection does not consist in an undue development of the differentiating element, but in giving the various modes of mind their proper proportions. Viewed as a *means* to practical ends, there can be little doubt that the detailed and particular type of intelligence, here attributed to the country, is the superior. (*OUR*, Sep. 1899, 86)

The author further mused that the practical element of New Zealanders' intellect possibly resulted "from a so-far successful subordination of Nature" (112). In other words, the project of controlling the mechanisms of natural selection was proceeding in the right direction. As a consequence, the author of the prize essay emphatically concluded: "there is no strong reason to suppose that the characteristics which we have inherited from our ancestors will be permanently disturbed, in any great degree" (114). The essay ended with a presumption that corresponds to Belich's interpretation of New Zealanders as "better Britons": New Zealanders would not suffer any bad effects from their natural surroundings, instead they would improve their British virtues "in a spiral ascent" (*ibid.*) towards their glorious future in New Zealand.

In 1902, another student, Utilitas, did not profess the same confidence regarding the future of debate. For him, the dialectic was the most valuable asset to secure the quality and survival of deliberation at New Zealand's colleges. The original objective to promote "fellowship" among students was put under strict constraints. Utilitas scolded fellow debaters for their frequent use of "burlesque." He called for "careful definition, orderly arrangement of material, clear and forceful putting of points" (*CCR*, June 1902, 11). Utilitas based the demands on the argument that "the aim of education is to make



us of service to each other in the strong life of our manhood” (12). As a consequence, the author did not ask for more enthusiasm and individuality among members. He instead sought to secure the success of a debate through the “quality of the speeches” and “the general conduct of the discussion” (11). From his point of view, “a lowering of the standard of debate” was not acceptable.

At the same time, students questioned the supposedly advantageous effect of norms in debates. Resistance grew in a student community that was assured of itself and no longer struggled for its survival. In 1903, the *Marte Nostro* editorial complained that “every debate is the same. None of the students show any originality” (Appendix 9). The author granted that “it is good to keep to the same general rules from year to year ... without them, there would be no unity among us” (Appendix 9). Instead, the over-formalisation of debate and college life, deprived of any substantial information, became the target of the magazine’s criticism. The author called for individuality because without it “any society comes gradually to be conducted with an increasing monotony which makes progress impossible” (Appendix 9). Rules preserved the superficial order “but within these general rules, individuality should have full play” (Appendix 9). *Marte Nostro* based its criticism on the argument that progress was vital for society in general and that it was made possible by “active spirit” and “freshness” (Appendix 9). In other words, individuality and progress were pivotal to the debating society’s success.

By the turn of the century, other less optimistic ideas had infiltrated the previously dominant belief in human progress and the taming of nature. Knowledge and nature did not seem to keep their promise of certainty, harmony and predictability. Likewise, the Arnoldian instinct of conduct, never a very specific category, was claimed by scientific discourse to account for the evolution of man’s intellectual and moral capacities. Frequent discussions of the academic curriculum did not help to clarify the question of

social responsibility and learning. In debate, certainty of knowledge and procedure defended its dominant position. Individuality and belief were neglected. This development was further nourished by the nineteenth-century dichotomy of dialectic and rhetoric, which led to an emphasis on elocution—a technical fusion of rhetoric and dialectic.

### **Eloquence and Elocution: The Best of Dialectic and Rhetoric**

In the nineteenth century, rhetoric and dialectic were predominantly characterised by what van Eemeren et al. term “the *conviction-persuasion* duality” (Eemeren et al. 1996, 189). Rhetoric was the domain of persuasion and strategic interests.<sup>12</sup> Dialectic was the supposedly neutral form of argumentation that produced reliable knowledge and convinced individuals of its validity.<sup>13</sup> In New Zealand, the dichotomy of rhetoric and dialectic was bridged by eloquence—a concept that traditionally described the high standards of rhetorical practice. In the United States, eloquence had a similar function but was eclipsed by elocution in its emphasis on the practical elements of public oratory and rhetorical delivery. The elocution movement did not come to New Zealand but its focus on speech making, mastery of the technical aspects of voice and gesture significantly interested students in New Zealand and shifted the emphasis on rational argumentation towards delivery. In 1895 in Dunedin, a “Wellwisher” who preferred to remain anonymous outlined that the purpose of a debating society was to “train its

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<sup>12</sup> Even though Habermas regarded rhetoric and dialectic as a unity, he also associated rhetoric with strategic interests and favoured dialectic. Edgar makes this clear when he analyses Habermas’s notion of consensus: “Thus consensus brought about by overt threats of violence, by bribery or by the undefended resort to political or status hierarchies is not communicative action; it is, rather, strategic action, whereby one party treats the others as objects that can be manipulated, rather than as subjects with whom one communicates. Similarly, the use of rhetoric, precisely insofar as the rhetorician attempts to persuade an audience by means other than evidence and rational argument (and, indeed, thereby seeks to forestall the raising of problematic validity claims) is an example of strategic action” (Edgar 2005, 155).

<sup>13</sup> Professor Haslam made the binary opposition the theme of his lecture: “What Sokrates objected to was their [sophists’] method. For in their desire to *persuade* they lost their touch of the art of *convincing* men. They called in the emotions to their aid, and no longer appealed to reason alone. They neglected to develop the positive side of Dialectic, and applied themselves to the cultivation of Rhetoric” (Haslam 1884, 10).

members in the art of public speaking” (*OUR*, June 1895, 56). A few years later, the *Otago Review* called on students to promote the debating society “by their eloquence” and “inspire others to follow their good example” (*OUR*, May 1900, 8). In 1893, Howell enthusiastically professed that training in eloquence assisted students in affecting the New Zealand public forum: “In this society we are preparing ourselves to be speakers, preachers, lawyers, and orators, who are destined to move multitudes by the power of their eloquence, to direct the energies and govern the fate of their country” (Howell 1893, 133). The experienced political orator Scobie Mackenzie balanced Howell’s statement in his lecture and observed that eloquence was only forceful in combination with substantial abilities or knowledge. Parliamentary practice for Mackenzie was a fusion of eloquence and management skills, even though he made clear that eloquence was probably the weaker of the two: “It seems to me that the last two qualities [force of character and managing men in Parliament], or either of them alone, will, without eloquence, be found far more valuable than eloquence without these qualities” (Mackenzie 1895, 131). Knowledge and self-confidence were also crucial in yielding one’s speaking powers to the best advantage: “Courage is but another name for self-confidence, and self-confidence arises out of the consciousness that you are perfect master of your subject. ‘Knowledge of your subject,’ someone has said, ‘is the foundation of all eloquence’” (134). A few years later, a student in Dunedin confirmed Mackenzie’s opinion and argued that “debaters should be urged on by enthusiasm and fortified by knowledge. By enthusiasm we shall obtain brilliance and by knowledge we shall obtain solidity” (*OUR*, Oct. 1899, 131). Haslam’s notion of dialectic as conduct was reinforced by the idea that debating essentially consisted in training in public speaking. While the best of intellect and ethics was secured by proper codes of discursive conduct, the technical realisation of these norms in public was created by the teaching of eloquence.

Late nineteenth-century American discourse on the advantages of debating provides a context for the use of eloquence in New Zealand. In 1897, Ralph Curtis Ringwalt employed the conviction-persuasion divide to praise debating tournaments for their promotion of rational argumentation. He maintained that tournaments “arose in a natural reaction against the lax condition of the literary societies” (Ringwalt 1897, 633). In 1900, George Pierce Baker (1866-1935) gave a lecture to the Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools in Philadelphia.<sup>14</sup> He focused his speech on the requirements of intercollegiate debating. Baker refrained from joining the chant for formalised and rational debate and, instead, called for the combination of oratorical, elocutionary and dialectic qualities in the training of debaters at American colleges.<sup>15</sup> According to Baker, the process of instruction consisted in two stages. First, students “must be taught to respect close, analytical, judicial thinking, and to think thus for themselves. Secondly, they must learn to adapt their special material, whatever it may be, to any particular audience” (Baker 1901, 247). Baker intended to make his students “master[s] of persuasion” (254) and “to show them that even the after-dinner speech should have a central idea and plan, as well as freshness and individuality of presentation” (256). His regard for elocution led him to perceive of public discourse beyond the boundaries of conviction and persuasion. His understanding of debate and eloquence aimed at a balanced unbiased instruction for students that accepts useful aspects of elocution as well as practical elements of logic. Baker’s lecture went beyond the boundaries of the conviction-persuasion opposition and used both terms to describe the strength of debate for students’ education.

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<sup>14</sup> Baker was a graduate from Harvard and remained there to teach in the English Department. Initially, he pursued studies of argumentation. In 1905, he started a class later called “Workshop 47” mainly concerned with instruction in dramatical performance. He became the teacher of Eugene O’Neill, Philip Barry, Sidney Howard and John Dos Passos. In 1925, Baker became professor in the history and technique of drama at Yale University. The information is taken from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica online*.

<sup>15</sup> Baker maintained that students at Harvard lacked general principles of public speaking and composition: “The effort of these men, then, lacks proof, moderation, fair-mindedness; it disregards the logical process, and the state of mind of the audience supposedly addressed” (Baker 1901, 247).

Having said this, during the course of his career, Baker developed a clear vision of rhetorical instruction that favoured an argumentative approach. Connors shows that Baker's position was the result of the specialisation of rhetorical theory (Connors 1981, 1985, 1997). Of the four modes of rhetoric: narration, description, exposition and argument, Baker concentrated on the last and in 1893 published *Specimens of Argumentation*, followed in 1895, by *Principles of Argumentation*. Connors argues that "it may indeed be said that Baker, in writing the first modern argumentation text, started in motion forces that would, 19 years later, result in the foundation of the Speech Association of America and the split-off from English departments of devotees of argument and the oral-discourse tradition that seemed to go along with it" (Connors 1985, 59). Bordelon points out that despite his early focus on argumentation, Baker "sought a balance between an emphasis on emotions and persuasion by the older oral argumentative tradition and a stress on formal logic" (Bordelon 2005, 416-7).<sup>16</sup> Baker could bridge the divide between dialectic and rhetoric, between conviction and persuasion, because he focused on the dynamics of argumentation and the individualistic dimension of articulation and delivery. In order to teach his students to create convincing arguments in debate, Baker wanted to maximise the effect of instruction and promoted two levels of training: practice in elocution and argumentation (Baker 1901, 250). Teachers of elocution worked on correcting the "delivery" of their arguments; Baker himself discussed the "analysis, evidence, rebuttal" (ibid.) of the speech. In order to promote the teaching of argumentation he also set out to redeem the reputation of elocution.<sup>17</sup> Baker intended to preserve the individualistic core of public

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<sup>16</sup> Clark and Halloran, for example, argue that "[t]he problems with Baker's rhetoric, as with professional culture in general, is that when knowledge is commodified as specialization and professional communities claim the authority to develop and apply that knowledge, few rules of rationality can be found that will apply across this fragmented spectrum" (Clark and Halloran 1993, 23). While I agree with Clark and Halloran on the limitations of specialised discourse, Bordelon accounts for Baker's 1901 address and his attempt to combine argumentation and elocution.

<sup>17</sup> Baker made it clear that he regarded elocution as a new subject not as traditional practice. He emphatically distanced himself from popular instruction in elocution: "Please, understand me: by

speaking but at the same time, make elocution a subject of instruction in the technicalities of speaking and debating well:

They [students] must be taught to assist themselves by pose and gesture, and to let their voices and faces respond to the subtlest shadings of their thought and the slightest emotional change. All this, too, they must be taught to do, not like other men of note, but in way that most express their individuality. ... When it is more general I am sure that elocution will recover from the evils attached to its friends. (253)

In reforming elocution, Baker was part of a trend in American higher education that specialised training in public speaking. Cerling argues that “the concept of eloquence [as] responsible, civic-minded speech was fragmented and privatized by the people who were in charge of educating the brightest and best in American society. And the concept of public discourse as a civic activity crucially important to the well-being of a democratic society was never fully restored to a central place in American higher education” (Cerling 1995, 244). I would add that eloquence was fragmented because delivery was separated from narration, description and exposition in the process of rendering public speaking more scientific and reliable. As a result, instruction in, and practice of, debate increasingly consisted in two of these four aspects of eloquence: norms of delivery and rules for the development of arguments.

In New Zealand, the notion of eloquence was not as precise as in America. Scientific discourse permeated New Zealand public discourse as in the United States but lacking the traditions of rhetoric, oratory and elocution made it impossible for New Zealand students to set eloquence in a similarly specialised context. Prior to Baker’s use

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elocution I do not in the least mean teaching a boy to gurgle and quaver, ‘I stood on the bridge at midnight,’ or to fill his lungs and shout ‘Blow, burgle, blow!’ In such work I have no interest ... I wish intensely ... that somebody would find a new name for elocution. Could that be done, we should get so much more from our college faculties, who are at present somewhat hide-bound on the subject of elocution” (Baker 1901, 252). Nan Johnson and Cmiel trace the dubious reputation of elocution to an overwhelming publication of manuals and text-books on elocution (Johnson 1991, 150-1, 1993; Cmiel 1990). Johnson analyses three groups of handbooks: cross-over materials, papers by elocution lecturers and finally reciters. The first type was intended for use in colleges and schools, for readers and speakers in general. The second and third types of manuals were intended for the general public (Johnson 1993). Robb shows that what she terms the “elocutionary movement” strove to establish credibility for their studies on the basis of scientific research and methodology (Robb 1954, 184-200).

of the term, the elocution movement denoted a school of instruction that argued that refined speech could elevate the public status of a person (Cerling 1995, 60). New Zealand students readily adopted this feature to debate because it complemented the rule of social selection and continuous progress in the colony. The fact that, originally, elocution in America regarded expressive gesture, accent, inflection and intonation as “more effective than speech itself”(ibid.) did not enter the New Zealand idea of eloquence. Eloquence in the colony, without the problematic history it had experienced in America, developed into a means that easily traversed the gap between public speaking and rational argumentation. “Eloquent” properly captured the spirit of a lecture when it was described “as ‘characteristic, interesting, scholarly, clever, and interspersed with a sufficient amount of humour to make it exceedingly entertaining’” (OW, 19 April 1994, 13). New Zealand’s debaters approached the practice of debates and the use of arguments with a pragmatic attitude that kept the final goal in mind. The *Otago Review* notices that if “ease of expression is not to defeat its purpose, it must be balanced by the cultivation of common sense. There is always a danger of refining the vital force out of an argument” (OUR, June 1898, 39). As a result, the persuasion-conviction dichotomy did not figure highly in students’ debates. Quite unintended, New Zealand students and professors put to action Baker’s theory of a balanced instruction in debate that discarded the stereotype of “good” conviction and “bad” persuasion. The cultivation of an argumentative style that secured the highest level of intellectual activity and moral principles lay at the heart of student debates in New Zealand.

### **Australian Federation, Political Tactics and New Zealand’s Desire for Certainty**

In New Zealand, argumentation in debate was marked by a code of conduct that endorsed debate as an intellectually demanding and socially fair activity. Part of the student body, like the Barrackers’ Brigade, challenged the pro-and-contra pattern of

debate and increasingly questioned the reliability of those opinions that emerged from it. Their understanding of dialectic resulted in a form of debate that did not promote absolute truth but instead, portrayed knowledge, conviction and fairness as passing phenomena. Their procedures resembled those that van Eemeren in 1996 described as Aristotle's view on dialectic:

Arguing for and against a standpoint in a debate worked like this. First of all, although the discussion may have seemed to be about specific questions, it was, on closer inspection, about general questions. The opponent offered the defender a thesis in the form of a question like 'Must this man be punished?' By way of this specific question (and the subsequent questions and answers) a general question was raised, for example, 'Is virtue teachable?' The defender could reply in the affirmative or in the negative. Depending on the answer the opponent had in mind, he then had to attack either the thesis 'Virtue is teachable' or the thesis 'Virtue is not teachable.' Arguments pro and contra recurred continually throughout the course of the debate. Once the defender had been committed to a thesis by his answer, the attacker would pose a further question, and so on. (Eemeren et al. 1996, 38)<sup>18</sup>

The difficulty in analysing student procedures of argumentation in New Zealand is to identify the general underlying question that guided their discussion. As with the core proposition that 'virtue is not teachable,' New Zealand students operated with general statements that upheld their argumentation and gained their relevance from the changing pool of social knowledge. The preference among student debaters for stock topics—academic dress, the Australian Federation, cremation, women's franchise—reflected this tendency. American contemporary research in the history of rhetoric shows that the analysis of a particular debate or series of debates reveals contextual information that otherwise would be neglected.

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<sup>18</sup> Socrates in *Meno* is concerned with the definition of virtue as either knowledge or belief. Meno begins by asking Socrates whether virtue is teachable. In order to answer the question, Socrates first seeks to define what virtue truly is, he looks for a definition. Socrates, holding true to his dialectic principles, determines that virtue is either knowledge or belief. If it were knowledge, it would be teachable; if it were belief, it would not be. Socrates' conclusion stems from his argument that knowledge is teachable because it consists of rational definitions and facts. In contrast, beliefs (also called divine dispensation by Socrates) are not based on premises of certainty. Scott argues that Socrates ended his exchange with Meno by subscribing to a disjunctive view: that virtue is both knowledge and true belief. (Scott 2006, 177)



In 1990, Zarefsky, for example, set out to identify pivotal issues of the Lincoln-Douglas debates by concentrating on a contextual analysis of their argumentative procedure.<sup>19</sup> His research led to new insights into the American history of ideas in general and Lincoln's career in particular. In other words, Zarefsky demonstrated that the debates were crucial for Lincoln's political growth. The debates publicly defined Lincoln's political agenda and moreover, established debates as an instrument of populist persuasion in American politics. Zarefsky was able to complete his analysis because he assumed that the debates were essentially public events:

What is particularly important about the debates is that they were a sustained public discussion of the issues most troubling the nation. To focus on public discussion is to say that the speeches were not abstract philosophical theses. They were attempts to reach and persuade audiences, who brought to the discussion their own predispositions and concerns. The argumentation is pragmatic, as each candidate attempted both to make his views palatable to the audience and also to modify the audience's view of itself and of the issues. (Zarefsky 1990, x)

Zarefsky presents the dialectic of these debates as intrinsic to the rhetorical landscape of ante-bellum American politics. He argues that "[t]he Lincoln-Douglas debates deserve their exalted historical position not for the reasons often given but because they so clearly demonstrate the possibilities for discussion when a fundamental issue is transformed in the crucible of public debate" (222). He identifies four types of arguments that were employed by the two opponents to tackle their audience: conspiracy, legal, moral and historical argument (xii). The Lincoln-Douglas Debates were not merely the result of eloquence or effective argumentation; they were possible only because of the combination of strategic argumentation and the force of rhetorical display in the wake of a paradigm shift in American politics.

In the nineteenth-century New Zealand context, student debates on the issue of Australian Federation reflected a significant political event that had the potential to

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<sup>19</sup> The debates took place in 1858 in the course of the senatorial campaign in Illinois in which "Lincoln was the officially endorsed opponent" (Zarefsky 1990, 43) of Stephen A. Douglas.

change the future of the colony. Clearly, its scale was different from the Lincoln-Douglas debates. None of the participants had yet launched a political career, nor were any of the debaters eventually assassinated. The resolution of not joining the Federation was not prompted by a declaration of war. The controversy regarding Federation in New Zealand did not establish debate as a political means but it did give rise to a certain notion of what New Zealand as a colony and nation should become. Federation claimed the attention of New Zealanders from the 1880s. Students, it seems, were very much interested in the question. As early as 1883, Louis Cohen read a paper on colonial federation to students in Christchurch. The same year in Dunedin, students determined that federation and independence would not benefit the colony. The debates coincided with the Intercolonial Convention in Sydney. In 1883, Premier Harry Atkinson and Sir Frederick Whitaker attended the meeting as the New Zealand delegates. The convention resolved to put an end to French transportation of convicts to the Pacific. Furthermore, the assembled representatives wanted to voice their opposition to any further non-British annexation of Pacific islands. The meeting drew up a draft Federal Council Bill, the reception of which in New Zealand and the Australian colonies was far from enthusiastic. Sinclair observes that even though Atkinson and Sir Frederick Whitaker supported the idea of federation, in parliament, “the idea was not received with much favour” (Sinclair 1986, 110). Nevertheless, in 1884 during election year, the Convention prompted New Zealand’s politicians to discuss the issue, mostly in terms of “the limited, mainly consultative arrangement of the Federal Council” (Sinclair 1987b, 91). While the issue did not meet with much enthusiasm among New Zealand politicians, the problem continued to spark students’ interest.

In 1888, students in Canterbury were well aware of Australia’s “tendency to separation” and resolved that it should not be encouraged (MBL, *minute book*, 20 May 1888). In Auckland, by contrast, students were in favour of imperial federation. Only

two years later, the Christchurch debaters reversed their decision and agreed that “Australian federation is practicable and desirable” (MBL, *minute book*, 9 August 1890). Yet another conference on federation, taking place the same year in Melbourne, became the rationale of students’ discourse. The decision in favour of the proposition diverged from general sentiment. In 1890, former cabinet minister John Bryce professed that federation “is not a subject that is much spoken of in the colony or in which much interest is taken and I believe that that arises from the fact that it is instinctively felt that we should be making a very great mistake if we abandoned our independence and joined in federation with colonies so very distant from our own” (qtd. in Sinclair 1986, 110).

Appendix nine displays the records of the 1891 Auckland debate on Australian Federation. This particular debate was lost by the majority of two, suggesting that members rejected the idea of joined colonies of Australia and New Zealand. Students in Auckland included the federation issue in their syllabus because they were aware of the political changes at hand in the Pacific region. In March and April 1891, the National Australian Convention met in Sydney. The Australian colonies sent seven delegates each. New Zealand was represented by Sir Harry Atkinson, Sir George Grey and Captain William R. Russel, an outspoken opponent to the idea of federation. The Convention drafted a constitution that the respective colonies were supposed to approve. New Zealand did not even consider the proposal in Parliament. Sinclair reports that “[t]he three New Zealand representatives in 1891 were forbidden by resolution of parliament to commit New Zealand to joining a federation” (Sinclair 1987b, 93). After 1891, by parliamentary choice, New Zealand was no longer represented at federal conferences.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Dalley and McLean also connect the federation question with New Zealand’s interest in creating a Pacific empire. In the 1890s, Seddon was “far from looking westwards to Australia” (Dalley and McLean 2005, 220). Dalley and McLean show that Seddon was directing New Zealand’s interests towards

In 1895, students in Dunedin, by contrast, decided that New Zealand should not federate with Australia. Later in 1897, the tournament debate in Auckland was likewise decided in favour of non-federation. In 1899, Auckland debaters again discussed the issue of federation. Like their fellow students in Canterbury a new generation of Dunedin students did not hold firm to their previous beliefs. In 1900, the Otago debating society resolved that the time was “ripe for the entrance of New Zealand into the Australian Confederation” (*OUR*, Sep. 1900, 89). Again in 1901, students in Christchurch addressed the same question (the results of the debate were not recorded). Between 1899 and 1901, public discourse on federation in New Zealand gained a new impetus. With New South Wales as the last Australian colony deciding to join the federation, by June 1899 the idea was no longer a hypothetical construct but a tactile certainty. New Zealand had to react. Sinclair observes that the *New Zealand Herald* “published reports and letters every few days on the topic” (Sinclair 1986, 112). The Wellington *Evening Post* “campaigned in favour of federation for a few months” (113). Public meetings and debates among farmers and trade unionists took place (113, 116-7). Both groups discussed the issue based on the question whether they could compete with the Australian market.

In 1900, public sentiment and a feeling of uncertainty were adequately addressed by New Zealand Premier Richard Seddon (1845-1906) (Dalley and McLean 2005, 220). Responsibility for the problem was officially transferred to the authority of the Royal Commission that was meant to investigate the advantages and disadvantages of federation.<sup>21</sup> The official Federation Commission report of 1901 conveyed the

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annexation of Hawai’i and Samoa. Student debates show, what Sinclair also notices, that there was “little evidence of public interest in this aspiration” (Sinclair 1986, 121). Mein Smith maintains that “the idea of a ‘Pacific federation’, promoted in New Zealand, ran in tandem with Australasian Federation as a means to maintain imperial unity” (Mein Smith 1999, 401).

<sup>21</sup> The royal commission was founded in December 1900 and composed of ten prominent citizens, presided over by Colonel Albert Pitt (1841-1906). The group set to work on January 17 in 1901 and held meetings in Invercargill, Dunedin, Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland. They also visited New South Wales, Tasmania, Victoria, South Australia and Queensland (Knox 1971-73, 5:1790).

impression that most New Zealanders were largely ignorant of the terms and conditions involved in the Commonwealth Constitution Act. The commissioners stated that the act ‘‘had not even been read by many of those who attended before your Commissioners, and its provisions, generally speaking, were imperfectly understood by many of those who professed to have considered the subject of federation somewhat attentively’’ (McIntyre and Gardner 1971, 265f). After more than eighteen years, on the first of January 1901, the Australian Commonwealth was officially launched without New Zealand.<sup>22</sup>

On the one hand, this result is sometimes interpreted as an expression of New Zealanders’ lack of interest in the issue. Gibbons, for example, argues that political indifference in the question permeated public discourse: ‘‘[i]n the 1880s and 1890s federation with the Australian colonies had been discussed by New Zealand politicians, without much enthusiasm. Their apathy reflected that of the New Zealand public’’ (Gibbons 1992, 314). The frequency of students’ debates suggests the opposite. After 1891, concern for the question did not cease nor did students stop to discuss the topic. Sinclair’s discussion of the federation debate demonstrates that, in particular between July and September 1899, the New Zealand public actively addressed the situation (Sinclair 1986, 112-4). Sinclair portrays this diversified public discussion as if it were the profession of the will of one nation. He holds that after 1891, ‘‘the general feeling was that ‘our destiny lies apart’’’ (Sinclair 1986, 110). By contrast, the results of the students’ debates slightly complicate his statement. They instead confirm Belich’s analysis that federation reflected the economic situation of the colony: ‘‘in the 1880s,

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<sup>22</sup> Siegfried’s *Democracy in New Zealand*, originally published in 1904 in Paris under the title *La démocratie en Nouvelle-Zélande*, contains an interesting account of an outsider’s perspective on the political circumstances of the Australian Federation (Siegfried 1982, 333-348). New Zealand was portrayed as the loyal Pacific colony that preferred to associate and compare itself with England rather than with Australia. Siegfried was most likely familiar with the Royal Commission’s report because his argumentation as to why New Zealand did not join the Federation showed a remarkable resemblance to the reasoning of the commissioners’ statements.

New Zealand was a sinking ship looking to join a rising one. In the 1890s, the situation was reversed” (Belich 2001, 49).<sup>23</sup> McIntyre in Australia and New Zealand during those years of federation negotiations overtly contradicts Sinclair. He shows that New Zealand’s pragmatic treatment of the idea was conceived by Australians as an exception to the “compelling emotional force of the national project”: “Because federation was considered there [in New Zealand] primarily as a business arrangement, because the royal commissioners were so puzzled by the sentimental appeal of a national union, it fell flat” (McIntyre 2002, 8). Student debates in New Zealand illustrate that argumentation was dominated by economic and political concerns. Thoughts of nationhood and identity, even of a separate New Zealand identity, did not enter their discourse. Their discussion were structured on the basis of rational arguments that defied any “sentimental appeal”.

New Zealand students contested the idea of federation on the grounds of three groups of argument: economic considerations, political isolation and geographical distance. Participants in the 1891 debate did not use moral, legal or even historical arguments. Remarkably, they further neglected any arguments remotely related to the social demeanour of their Australian neighbours. They refrained from formulating any notions of colonial superiority or arguments based on New Zealand’s historical ties to England. They also did not allude to New Zealand’s moral obligation to Great Britain, even though they could easily have identified their colony with the “Britain of the South.” The previous chapters demonstrate that it was not beyond debaters’ abilities to go down this argumentative alley. Yet, Hunter observes that “[H]istorians have increasingly leaned towards arguments of sentiment, emotion or nascent nationalism as the main reasons for the Australian colonies’ agreement and the New Zealand decision to remain outside the commonwealth” (Hunter 2006, 76). The lack of all of these

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<sup>23</sup> Belich actually reinforces this view and further maintains that “Australian federation shrank New Zealand to a quarter of its former size” (Belich 2003, 223).

arguments in students' debates might indicate that certain aspects of federation could not have been addressed.<sup>24</sup> The political parameters that the Seddon administration established for the federation debate were not advantageous for the cultivation of emotional arguments. Moreover, the code of conduct in collegiate debates preferred expressions of certainty and fairness to statements of doubtful rational quality.

In August 1897, Christopher James Parr (1869-1941) (who had a few years earlier defended federation in a different debate) found himself on the other side of the controversy.<sup>25</sup> After graduating from Auckland University, he had become a member of the Auckland Athenaeum debating society. In 1897, the Athenaeum and the university society staged their first recorded competitive debate on the question: "Should New Zealand federate with Australia?" (SCUA, *minute book*, 24 August 1897). Parr, together with Messrs. Carr and Naile, both former members of the university debating society, argued against the proposition and "after an extremely interesting debate, listened to by a large audience, the judges decided in favour of the Athenaeum Society." In other words, what Parr as a student had lost by speaking in favour of federation in 1891, in 1897, he gained by arguing against it only six years later. His previous exposure to an almost identical debating situation presumably assisted him in overcoming former argumentative shortcomings.

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<sup>24</sup> Zarefsky puts forth a similar argument for the Lincoln-Douglas debates (Zarefsky 1990, 221).

<sup>25</sup> Parr is possibly best known for his achievements as minister of education and as high commissioner for New Zealand. In 1890, Parr found himself at the start of his political career and had just been admitted to the bar for one year. Parr was an effective solicitor and made £510 profit in his first year of practice in Auckland. His later career included positions as postmaster general and minister of telegraphs (1925). In 1962, he became high commissioner for New Zealand in the United Kingdom. Bush describes Parr's secret of success as a mixture of determination and conviction: "James Parr was a man of immense self-assurance combined with a degree of pugnacity and a liking for self-promotion; he was capable of looking both suave and resolute. He abhorred vacillation, fence-sitting and honeyed words, and it was a blend of idealism, energy, determination and lucid persuasiveness which underlay his remarkable mayoral and ministerial achievements" (Bush, DNZB).

In 1891, students, on the one hand, came surprisingly close to the findings of the royal commission ten years later.<sup>26</sup> On the other, they used arguments that were also put forth by the Australian Federation League, an association which favoured federation and set up branches in Christchurch and Auckland. Percy F. Battley, arguing against federation, was of the opinion that New Zealand was not likely to gain economically from federation.<sup>27</sup> He did not know that the Commission's report in 1901 concluded on the basis of statistical data (employed as infallible proof) that "the exports of New Zealand produce to the Commonwealth in 1899 amounted to only 8.4 per cent. of the total exports" (McIntyre and Gardner 1971, 267). Imports even amounted to the smaller number of 5.8 per cent. The report assumed that New Zealand would not be able to find new markets in Australia because the latter colony "would supply her own requirements" (268). Parr, in 1891 arguing in favour of federation in the students' debate, by contrast, pointed out that "one-third of New Zealand's exports went to Australia, and this under very large Customs duties" (Appendix 8). In 1897, a version of Parr's argument recurred in J. Kennedy Brown's pamphlet for the Federation League entitled "Should New Zealand Federate with the Australian Colonies? To Which the Answer is an Emphatic YES!," in which he stated that Australia would provide an excellent market for New Zealand's cereals and fruit.<sup>28</sup> Brown lent his claims considerable weight on the basis of his own business experiences in the Australian colonies. Suggesting furthermore that free trade within a federate Tasman region "would double the exports" (Appendix 8) supported Parr's argument in favour of Federation. Since 1879, free trade and protection arguments had been regular features in

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<sup>26</sup> Appendix three provides a record of the debate from the minute book of the society as well as from the *New Zealand Herald*. Reference to this particular debate will henceforth refer to the text contained in the appendix.

<sup>27</sup> Like Parr, Battley became a solicitor in Auckland. Besides his acceptance to the bar, nothing else is known about his life.

<sup>28</sup> J. Kennedy Brown was the honorary secretary of the Auckland branch of the Federation League and a wealthy businessman who could look back on successful trades with the Australian colonies. Sinclair dismisses Brown as an "ebullient nonentity" (Sinclair 1986, 112; 1987b, 95).



student debates. The question of Federation in 1891 provided fresh grounds for their application. That a similar logic was employed by a public forum like the Federation League suggests that free-trade arguments were widely understood among a general public. Belich's revision of the situation of the Australasian colonies illustrates that the economic arguments at the time did allow for ambiguous conclusions.<sup>29</sup> Australasian imports, for example, had dropped from 35 to 17 per cent by 1890, exports even from 46 to 17 per cent (Belich 2001, 49). Therefore, in 1891, Parr was using outdated figures when the decline in exports to Australia was already having an impact on New Zealand's economy. In 1897, he would not have committed the same mistake. From the point of view of contemporary critics, correct facts were conducive to success in debate. Belich makes clear that even though trade figures were declining, New Zealanders were still confident of profiting from possible free-trade arrangements within a federate Australasian region: "The Australasian market was still important to New Zealand in that year [1900], and though free-trade sentiment in New South Wales gave some hope of minimising the economic damage non-federation would cause, it was clearly probable that there would be some" (Belich 2001, 50). Mr. Battley, arguing against Mr. Parr and for non-federation, interpreted the facts of a decreasing economic dependence

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<sup>29</sup> Belich uses the term "Australasia" to refer to Australia and New Zealand as one political and economic entity in the Pacific region. "Coined by the French in the eighteenth century to include New Guinea, 'Australasia' soon gained its modern meaning: Australia plus New Zealand. ... 'Australasia' was a very loose, vague and semi-tangible imagined community. But it was real; there were many links beyond the conceptual. All seven colonies were neo-Britains" (Belich 2001, 47). Mein Smith argues that "Australasia had come to mean the Australian colonies, New Zealand, Fiji, 'and any other British Colonies or possessions in Australasia'" (Mein Smith 2005, 92) and Sinclair maintains that "the seven colonies formed a community in many different ways" (Sinclair 1986, 109). Mein Smith, Belich and Sinclair reverse Gibbons' statement that "New Zealanders were not Australians or even 'Australasians'" (Gibbons 1992, 314). Moreover, in 1899, a student in Christchurch referred to the Australian colonies as "our inter Australasian colonies" (System of Education, manuscript A, MBL, 8) implying that New Zealand was integral to the British dominion in the Pacific region. Certainly, the address of Governor Jervois (1821-1897) to the New Zealand Institute in 1884 lent the term some reality. In his speech, Jervois examined New Zealand's defence and insisted that New Zealand's military structure had to be placed in an imperial as well as Australasian context. He concluded in pointing out that New Zealand should become part of the imperial Australasian stronghold: "I venture to urge the measures I have suggested, in order that the country itself may be secure; that it may take its share in Australasian defence; and that it may do its duty as a part of the British Empire; looking forward to the time when New Zealand may become – as I believe she is destined to become – a proud member of a mighty federation of British peoples – able to hold their own against the world" (Jervois 1884, xli).

in his favour. He maintained that New Zealand was not receiving help from Australia and therefore, would suffer little from not joining. His version of the economic situation carried some weight in view of his victory in the controversy.

The question of federation was associated with issues of political and economic isolation. In 1891, Parr compared New Zealand to Newfoundland and to the latter's failure to join the Canadian Federation League. He sought to back his defence with political development within the Empire that could be interpreted to New Zealand's disadvantage. Newfoundland, in 1891, was one of the four existent British colonies that had not subscribed to the Canadian Federation. In contemporary discourse, this North American constellation was used as an argument in favour of Home Rule in Ireland. Ironically, on 26 September 1907, Newfoundland (with New Zealand) became a dominion, assuming complete self-government. Mr. Parr showed considerable foresight in his argumentation. Battley was not inclined to take him up on his claim that New Zealand "would leave herself open to all sorts of insults" (Appendix 8). Instead, Battley contended that New Zealand would not isolate itself by refusing to join. He implied that the only isolation New Zealand faced was its political separation from England. Where Australia was concerned, using a Utilitarian argument, Battley was of the opinion that New Zealand simply could not be isolated from Australia because there was nothing material to be separated from. New Zealand did not receive any help from the Australian colonies and therefore, had nothing to lose. To lend his argumentation the necessary political authority, Battley quoted, like many of his contemporaries, Sir John Hall.<sup>30</sup> Battley was trying to counterbalance Parr's accusation of isolation with the *cul-de-sac* argument that New Zealand was already isolated from Australia by sheer geographical distance and that this amounted to a practical barrier that should not be

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<sup>30</sup> John Hall's original statement was actually misquoted by Percy F. Battley. Hall said: "Nature had made twelve hundred impediments to the inclusion of New Zealand in any such federation in the twelve hundred miles of stormy ocean" (qtd. in Knox 1971-73, 5:1789).

crossed. New Zealand's special natural setting once again proved to be an effective discursive asset: it reinforced notions of New Zealand's uniqueness and national awareness. It furthermore conveyed the idea that Australia and New Zealand were separated by the laws of nature. These were irrevocable and represented an absolute, that is, scientific truth. While it was worth the effort to balance the principle of natural selection by trying to improve the intellectual and mental abilities of New Zealanders through education, the same was not true for the distance between Australia and New Zealand. Battley quoted Hall because his exclamation became an argument conferring certainty in a discourse that was recurrently changing its core tenets. In other words, the distance of twelve hundred miles could not be altered by any human will or force.

It is striking that in the debate of 1891, not one debater explicitly appealed to national sentiment to argue against any active involvement in the Federation.<sup>31</sup> Many students at the three university colleges had ties to Australia or moved to the Australian urban centres.<sup>32</sup> In 1891, Charles Frederick Goldie (1870-1947), for example, was on the Auckland debating society's committee and listened to Parr's and Battley's contest. That same year, Louis John Steele convinced Goldie's father to permit Charles "to undertake further art training abroad" (Blackley, DNZB). The next year, "abroad" for Charles meant his first exhibition of still lifes in Sydney, after which he came back to New Zealand. Belich argues that the "Tasman Sea was more bridge than barrier" (Belich 2001, 50). The journey to Australia was in fact one of the most frequently made

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<sup>31</sup> Mein Smith, for example, analyses the federation controversy of the 1890s in a context of national and imperial sentiment: "Imperialism and nationalism were not mutually exclusive; often in balance, they might present as Janus-faced. Indeed, imperialism could manifest as nationalism and vice versa, blurring the boundaries of identity. ... The 'soul of the Empire' for Jebb was 'not one, but two'; the one the awakening patriotism of the native-born ... and the other the British imperial 'life-task' of spreading civilisation" (Mein Smith 2005, 92). I do not entirely agree with Mein Smith on this point because students' debates suggest that self-perception of young New Zealanders was not fuzzy. As illustrated in chapter two, terms like empire, nationalism, patriotism, "old world" and "mother country" were not contradictory to students, instead, they were part of a contingent, perfectly reasonable argumentation.

<sup>32</sup> Arnold suggests that during the Exodus of the 1880s, when New Zealand lost approximately 20,000 of its settlers to the Australian territories, "one in ten of the high-school leavers of the 1870s had moved to Australia, mainly for urban careers, by the end of the 1880s" (Arnold 1987, 60).

among people in New Zealand. Charles Goldie (who in 1893 successfully enrolled at Académie Julien in Paris) exemplifies a young New Zealander's career "abroad." The Australian colonies frequently provided the first stepping stone for any career in Europe. Moreover, McGibbon demonstrates that New Zealand and the Australian colonies actually shared "a sense of isolation on the periphery of a culturally and racially alien region" (McGibbon 1991, 125). Students of all three colleges were torn when it came to a decision in favour or against federation, whatever the aspirations of the Seddon administration. The Boer War might have diverted any sense of failure at New Zealand's refusal to enter; it certainly helped to drown any pro-federation sentiment in a wave of national war fervour.<sup>33</sup>

In introducing this section on the procedure of debate, I quoted van Eemeren's description of Aristotelian debates. Van Eemeren relates: "By way of this specific question (and the subsequent questions and answers) a general question was raised, for example, 'Is virtue teachable?'" (Eemeren et al. 1996, 38). In case of the 1891 New Zealand student debate the specific question was clear: "Should New Zealand join the Australian Federation League?" (SCUA, *minute book*, 8 July 1891). The underlying propositions were less straightforward. From a slightly more general angle, students were trying to answer whether it were economically sensible to join a colonial federation that was independent of Great Britain. What was a colony's significance in the British Empire? How could the long-term consequences of colonial federation be determined? Sinclair concludes that "the argument most frequently advanced against federation was not economic but political: that New Zealand would lose its right to speak directly to the imperial government; would lose its political identity, its independence, its right to nationhood" (Sinclair 1986, 119). Even if, as Sinclair points out, students used economic arguments to discuss more fundamental political issues of

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<sup>33</sup> Mein Smith argues that "the Boer War in South Africa overshadowed" the activities of the Australian Federation League (Mein Smith 1999, 401).

nation-state, the essential question of their debate in 1891 was how the difference between dependence and independence could be understood in a colonial context.

Recently, Zarefsky has analysed current patterns of strategic manoeuvring in American political rhetoric (Zarefsky 2006, 411-4). In reviewing how, after September 11, the United States embarked on a “war on terrorism” and how since the argumentation has evolved, Zarefsky reveals a fundamental principle of strategic argumentation:

What must be done in rhetorical argument, then, is not to *challenge* strategic manoeuvring directly, but to *draw upon* the specific case of it, if only ‘for the sake of the argument,’ and then to show that the opponent’s position weakens rather than strengthens the value that is being strategically manoeuvred. So rather than denying that the U.S. is in a war on terrorism, critics have argued that policies they do not like have the effect of weakening the U.S. in that war. (Zarefsky 2006, 413)

Students in New Zealand employed a similar strategy. As the colony was not yet a member of the Australian Federation, Parr and Battley contested each other on grounds of “what if” assumptions. In other words, their entire discussion, as well as public discourse, transplanted the economic situation into the future. Federation politics were never directly criticised, only potential outcomes were declared undesirable. In 1900, one of the most influential public statements during the federation discussion came from Agent-General, William Pember Reeves. He was quoted declaring that the Australians “since they had already waited twelve years ... there was no reason why they should not wait another twelve months” (Sinclair 1986, 115) for New Zealand’s decision. He followed this opinion up with the even more suggestive argument that “New Zealand should have the right of entry on the original terms for seven years” (ibid.). The combination of these two announcements contributed to the final failure of the federation project for New Zealand. His statements were so effective because he successfully attacked the strategic positions of the Australian colonies. In implying that New Zealand might be ready to join the Federation in seven years time, he addressed

the topic from within. In other words, he argued that if the Federation was a done deal, New Zealand would be ready but at the moment was sorry to decline the offer because it would have a “weakening effect” on the Federation as well as New Zealand. Reeves was playing for time in the most effective way by accepting the Federation as a fact at a time when it was still in negotiation and by simultaneously nullifying its significance from a New Zealand perspective.

Moreover, the project of becoming a nation might not entirely have been associated with a bright future. McIntyre points out that even for the Australian Commonwealth, the project of nationhood was associated with a “fearful state of mind” (McIntyre 2002, 12). Students in New Zealand attempted to decide whether New Zealand could become an independent colony or state within the Empire or whether it had to bargain for independence from Great Britain at the cost of dependence on a federation with its Australian neighbours. Even arguments against federation on grounds of distance of the parliaments were reduced to a financial basis. In 1891, Mr. Battley argued that the prospective federate senate “would be a considerable distance away and some of our best men would be excluded by reason of expense” (SCUA, *minute book*, 8 July 1891).

New Zealand students’ debates suggest that the decision against federation did not derive from lack of enthusiasm, tendencies of national sentiment and one-dimensional political interests. The public controversy was conducted on the basis of palpable strategic manoeuvring on the part of politicians like Seddon and Reeves. It was fuelled by arguments based on economic uncertainties that mostly affected farmers, workers and trade unionists.<sup>34</sup> In 1899 and 1900, when public opinion became increasingly unpredictable, a regulatory instrument was put in place: the Royal Commission.

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<sup>34</sup> Mein Smith sees race, “specifically, the notion of white race, one destiny” (Mein Smith 1999, 402) as the crucial issue that put off New Zealanders. The absence of race in students’ debates on federation suggests that it was not tied closely enough to the anticipated results of an Australian Federation. I agree with Mein Smith that New Zealanders shared the concept of an “Anglo-Saxon race” with Australians. While Australian public discourse employed the idea to promote federation in the Australian colonies, students in New Zealand did not adopt this particular argument in the discussion on federation.

Discussion quietened and the political establishment was free to support their final decision by the findings of a supposedly unbiased and objective government survey. While Sinclair relies considerably on the Royal Commission to support his argument that non-federation was the will of one nation, he admits that the report of the commission was far from clear. He acknowledges that the “analysis is not always precise”, that people who were interviewed “gave two or more occupations” and that “it is not always clear whether a person is pro, anti or non-committal” (Sinclair, 1987b, 103, n23). The impression remains that the Royal Commission was a deliberate move on Seddon’s part to create the illusion that federation was against the will of a colony. Moreover, the fact that the Seddon administration felt the need for a commission does point towards a public controversy that was far from unambiguous. In other words, the federation issue gave the colonial government the chance to bring its population into line with the political will of a fraction of the intellectual elite. Collegiate debate on the issue evolved from this context of political tactics and control. The debates display little originality when viewed in this setting and their core argumentation resembled familiar claims that dominated political discourse at the time. Students were not captured by a national spirit rather they were spellbound by a political and argumentative strategy.

## **Conclusion**

In late nineteenth-century New Zealand, the core task of dialectic in debate amounted to the negotiation of theoretical considerations of deliberation and the practical instantiation of these norms to the social reality of students. Along these standards of interaction, expectations of certainty were created, which resonated in contemporary public discourse in New Zealand; the federation question being only one example for the array of pressing topics.

The initial suggestion of this chapter that debating societies created a “place of conversation that permits talking, requires listening, and invites reciprocal learning” (Arnett 2001, 328) in a spirit of dialogic civility is more complicated than it might imply. The Australian Federation debate shows that students debating activities were embedded in a framework of economic fears and political strategies that made it difficult for them to escape common patterns of discourse. As a consequence they did not significantly “lessen fear in the public arena by giving diversity of ideas space within the public domain” (ibid.). At the same time, they provided a platform where exchange of opinions was potentially possible. Debate in New Zealand as an academic pastime aimed at merging two fields of inquiry, the theoretical and the practical; the potential of free communication arose from the combination of the two spheres.

This rather trivial idea acquires a more profound reading when the practical aspect of debating is understood as the social relation among debaters and their connection with different levels of the world. Goode in his reading of Habermas points towards an angle of interpreting these relationships that adds another dimension to the practice of debate in nineteenth-century New Zealand:

According to the theory of universal pragmatics, whenever we communicate (through language or through action), we unavoidably ‘take up relations’ to a number of ‘domains of reality: ‘the’ world of external nature; ‘our’ world of society; ‘my’ world of internal nature’; and to the medium of language itself. The distinction between ‘society’ and ‘nature’ is not one of institutions versus trees and birds. ‘Nature’ refers to the domain of facticity that comes into existence whenever we take up an ‘objectivating’ attitude to something [*sic*]. ‘Society’ is constituted whenever we take up a first person plural orientation towards something. ... Every utterance, in this view, has a performative dimension or ‘illocutionary force’ even where this is hidden beneath the surface. Even a purely descriptive statement *offers* the hearer the possibility of new understanding of reality. (Goode 2005, 65)

Nineteenth-century debating discourse established a dichotomy of nature and society that Goode sees in Habermas’s work. Dialectic as a theoretical concept provided the backdrop for students to form apparently objective perspectives on society. These



perspectives were negotiated in a political arena. Dialectic reinforced beliefs in the objectivity of knowledge and justified the applicability of these norms to social realities. The component of dialectic in debate entitled antithetical discourse to the authority that usually only scientific inquiry could claim. Debate thus acquired a claim to “facticity” that other forms of rhetorical interaction gradually lost at the end of the nineteenth century.

Scientific legitimacy, however, could not substitute a need for social interconnectedness among students. Debating was meant to equip students with reliable means to determine universal truths with social relevance. Therefore, debating with its crucial dialectic component had a social edge that scientific inquiry lacked. Arnett expresses a similar idea when he maintains that a social component, that is, “a moral ‘why’”, creates a sense of freedom: “Embedded freedom discovered in a moral ‘why’ of a petite narrative limits the horizon of possibilities of action and frames responsible for the Other and the historical moment” (Arnett 2001, 334). In other words, debating societies might deliberate a small social norm and address only a fraction of historical realities, although “such caution does not stop the exchange, but moderates the conviction level of the participants”. As a consequence, conduct in late nineteenth-century New Zealand debate limited the exchange among students but did not end it. Zarefsky observes that “they [participants and listeners] engage in the act of shaping their world as they shape their language – even though, paradoxically, they are constrained by the very culture they create” (Zarefsky 1990, 245). As a consequence, the fusion of natural laws with social norms of conduct in debate, admittedly, restricted the applicability of student debates and at the same time, effectively reflected the fundamental influence of science and Darwinism on the structure of argumentation.

## Chapter Six

### “Hair-Splittings and Inconsistencies”<sup>1</sup>

#### Logic of Argument, Science and the Magic of the Unobservable

##### Introduction

Nineteenth-century New Zealand notions of what an argument should be were profoundly influenced by the scientific discourse of the time, in particular Mill’s inductive reasoning and Darwin’s theory of evolution. Induction was the dominant and supposedly fool-proof scientific method among scholars in New Zealand and often juxtaposed with the less reliable use of hypotheses. Darwinism dominated natural science, made its way into moral and political science as Social Darwinism and exacerbated the binarisms in popular understandings of religion and science, the supernatural and natural. Moreover, science at the end of the nineteenth-century was not an activity confined to the specialised few but a widely practised pastime, ubiquitous in popular public discourse, and as such was presented as spectacle as well as serious professional occupation. At the same time, “science” as a blurred conglomeration of various methods and practices was on the brink of breaking up into independent disciplines.

New Zealand students were familiar with the dominant scientific methodology. Professors in Logic, Mental Science and Natural Science like Macmillan Brown, MacGregor, Parker, Hutton and Thomson incorporated inductive and deductive logic as well as fundamental ideas of psychology and Darwinism in their syllabi. Besides, public lectures on scientific subjects resonated in the newspaper press at the time and reveal a broad engagement with scientific discourse. Accounts of lectures were frequently printed and distributed in pamphlet form. In New Zealand, science at the end of the

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<sup>1</sup> Carile 1891, 645.

nineteenth-century was omnipresent. After all, students' and professors' perception of debate as an advantageous skill in politics stemmed from inductive reasoning: debate apparently fostered eloquence; eloquence was practised by politicians, and therefore debate had to be conducive to political participation and leadership.

The following chapter will investigate the impact scientific methodology had on the logical structure of argument in, and the perception of, debate. The chapter starts with a brief examination of Habermas's position on argument as product in discourse. From Habermas's point of view, validity claims or arguments are essentially tied to the social reality to which they are applied. Furthermore, and particularly in volume two of *TCA*, he maintains that scientific methodology can significantly contribute to an understanding of human discourse. This connection will assist the second part of the chapter. The social relevance of their research ranked high for influential natural philosophers like Mill and Bain or scientists like Darwin and Herschel. New Zealand scholars like Thomson, Parker, Hutton and MacGregor adopted their particular idol's point of view and as a consequence became entangled in public controversies on Creation Theory and Social Darwinism. Their work represents late-Victorian efforts to come to terms with the increasingly "scientistic" notion of life. Arguments in students' debates similarly acquired a scientific element. The third part demonstrates how science in New Zealand was applied to phenomena of the unobservable and how, at the dawn of the twentieth century, this dichotomy of the real and unreal culminated in the acceptance of formalised scientific argumentation for the performance of debate. Eventually, this chapter shows that the smallest component of debate, that is, the argument, helped transform debate into a formalised exercise of logical prowess devoid of substantial content.

## **Habermas and Toulmin – Redeeming Scientific Argumentation**

Jürgen Habermas's ideas on argumentation theory are helpful for an analysis of the logical component of nineteenth-century argumentation because he places great significance on the connection between logic and scientific inquiry. On the one hand, his position helps to unveil motivations that directed the formalisation of late-Victorian New Zealand debate. On the other, Stephen Toulmin balances Habermas's views and provides an alternative reading to the comparatively inflexible perspective of critical theory. Moreover, Habermas's own interpretations are indebted to Toulmin's early work *The Uses of Argument* (1958, 2003). The following brief discussion of Habermas's and Toulmin's standpoints on the function of logic and scientific inquiry in argumentation affords a framework that, applied to a historical context wholly removed from that in which it was articulated, emphasises core patterns of perception of argument in nineteenth-century New Zealand.

Pre-eminent points of disagreement among nineteenth-century scholars of knowledge production involved doubts on the functionality of hypotheses, on the one hand, and an unwavering faith in the method of induction, on the other. I have shown that the epistemological certainty of facts was fundamental to New Zealand debate. In the following discussion, it will become clear that these facts had to be obtained through induction and on the basis of meticulous observation of human's natural environment – including man himself. This paradigm of inquiry lent facts their reliable and supposedly scientific validity. The bias towards materialism in nineteenth-century natural science spread into the social sciences and even became embedded in the humanistic arts in the form of a “scientific” canon. Scientific materialism also shaped notions of logical argumentation so that facts were assigned a normative function in the social contexts to which they were applied.

Habermas in *Discourse Ethics* compares his search for a normative element in argumentation with the scientific principle of induction: “... all studies of the logic of moral argumentation end up having to introduce a moral principle as a rule of argumentation that has a function equivalent to the principle of induction in the discourse of the empirical sciences” (Habermas 1990, 68). Habermas knows that normative validity claims can only be “*analogous to a truth claim*” (73) in science, but he nevertheless acknowledges that an essential degree of certainty needs to be maintained in practical discourse.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, he proposes that the intrinsic moral element of communicative action “subject[s] practical discourse to constraints” (75) that mirror those limitations exercised by induction in theoretical scientific discourse. Toulmin requires this also, but he does not equate the normative components of speech with the regulative function of induction in scientific discourse: “Outside the betting-shop, the casino and the theoretical physicist’s study, we may have little occasion to introduce numerical precision into our talk about probabilities, but the things we say are none-the-less definite or free from vagueness” (Toulmin 2003, 86). Toulmin prefers to count on the intelligibility of everyday discourse to decipher patterns of argumentation.<sup>3</sup> He abstains from constructing a discursive paradigm that ensures the “correct” outcome of dissent. Toulmin maintains that “an argument is like an organism. It has both a gross, anatomical structure and a finer, as-it-were physiological one” (87). Toulmin does not understand “organisms” as unreliable or ever-changing entities. For Toulmin, as for Habermas, “organisms”, that is, arguments remain discursive entities with material boundaries and stages of evolution. As a consequence, in Toulmin’s work argument is a flexible but also limited unit of communication.<sup>4</sup> Admittedly, Toulmin’s arguments live

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<sup>2</sup> Murphy discusses Habermas’s discourse ethics (Murphy III 1994, 112-118). Cronje 2001: 269-273

<sup>3</sup> After *Uses of Argument*, Toulmin with Rieke and Janik published *An Introduction to Reasoning* that deals with argumentation in “ordinary language and real-life issues” (Toulmin et al. 1979, 16).

<sup>4</sup> This idea of argument led Toulmin to the notion of argumentative fields, a concept that has been revised and largely abandoned today (Eemeren et al. 1996, 203-204). However, one of Toulmin’s legacies for

in a social context that provides room for communication without formalising the habits of discursive interaction. Habermas is less subtle in his descriptions of argument:

[A]rgumentation can be viewed from a third standpoint: it has as its aim to *produce* cogent *arguments* that are convincing in virtue of their intrinsic properties and with which validity claims can be redeemed or rejected. Arguments are the means by which intersubjective recognition of a proponent's hypothetically raised validity claim can be brought about and opinion thereby transformed into knowledge. (Habermas 1984, 25)

From Habermas's point of view, arguments serve a specific end, that is, to transform hypothesis into knowledge and to create an understanding between equal partners on grounds of "intrinsic properties". This evokes nineteenth-century programmes of scientific inquiry in which the transition from hypotheses to knowledge was achieved by means of inductive techniques. Habermas goes further and insists that "*all* arguments, be they related to questions of law and morality or to scientific hypotheses or to works of art, require the *same* basic form of organization, which subordinates the eristic means to the end of developing intersubjective conviction by the force of the better argument" (36). In other words, Habermas advocates universal intrinsic properties regardless of the context in which an argument is uttered. If argumentation at large aims at mutual understanding, then Habermas is convinced he is able to identify the fundamentals of arguments.

Based on Peirce's speech act theory, Habermas enters a realm of linguistic analysis where Toulmin cannot follow.<sup>5</sup> According to Habermas, an argument in communication always raises a validity claim. Equal partners in a speech situation react to this claim and attempt to determine its propositional content. This process encapsulates what

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argumentation is the notion of argument as a flexible reality that evolves in a discursive context and that challenges others depending on the context the argument is placed in. For Toulmin, arguments do not cause debate because of their intrinsic properties but because of their institutional setting—a notion that Habermas challenges.

<sup>5</sup> In *TCA*, Habermas criticises Toulmin for his perception of argument: "Toulmin does not push the logic of argument far enough into the domains of dialectic and rhetoric. He doesn't draw the proper lines between accidental *institutional differentiations of argumentation*, on the one hand, and the *forms of argumentation* determined by internal structure, on the other" (Habermas 1984, 35). Toulmin, I would argue, also does not push the logic of argument far enough into the sphere of science, at least from Habermas's point of view.

Habermas terms the “illocutionary force” of a rational claim: it describes the fundamental need of every argument to be criticisable. From Habermas’s point of view, criticism brings interlocutors together; we join a debate because we challenge a proposition raised by another.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the core of communicative rationality lies in the illocutionary force of arguments.<sup>7</sup>

Brought together like this, on the basis of the intrinsic criticisability of their various claims, individuals are free to mould their conversation. For Habermas, this freedom consists in the fact that with each utterance a speaker has to give reasons for her choice of argument: “The scope for freedom is characterised by the fact that under the presuppositions of communicative action a hearer can reject the utterance of a speaker only by denying its validity. Assent means then that the negation of the invalidity of the utterance is affirmed” (Habermas 1987, 73). Communication ultimately ends when the speakers concur that all propositions have been tested, all reasons have been brought forth and all of them can subscribe to one true claim. Habermas expands the feasibility of this rather restricted version of communication when introducing four kinds of validity claims (all still with their basic illocutionary force) and their applicability in the different spheres of reality: an inner-subjective world of each individual, “the” objective-external world, and “our” social world.<sup>8</sup> This reading of Habermas’s work

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<sup>6</sup> Habermas 1984, 289-295 (Habermas on Austin’s understanding of illocutionary acts), 1987, 67-76 (Habermas on the function of the illocutionary component of communicative action).

<sup>7</sup> Edgar 2005, 146-148; Crosswhite in *Rhetoric of Reason* likewise maintains that “Assertions are calls for response; they contain in themselves very specific invitations for questions and challenges. A claim made in the context of argumentation is not a monological asocial proposition but an event in a dialogue, a call for response. A claim is an assertion which contains an implicit plan of its own criticism” (Crosswhite 1996, 59).

<sup>8</sup> In *What is Universal Pragmatics*, Habermas explains these four modes of validity: “The speaker must choose an intelligible (*verständlich*) expression so that the speaker and hearer can *comprehend one another*. The speaker must have the intention of communicating a true (*wahr*) proposition (or a propositional content, the existential presuppositions of which are satisfied) so that the hearer can *share the knowledge* of the speaker. The speaker must want to express her intentions *truthfully* (*wahrhaftig*) so that the hearer can find the utterance of the speaker credible (can trust her). Finally, the speaker must choose an utterance that is right (*richtig*) with respect to prevailing normative ... so that the hearer can accept the utterance, and both ... hearer can, in the utterance, thereby *agree with one another* ... respect to a recognized normative background” (Habermas 1998, 22-23). In *TCA*, Habermas insists that in order to reach understanding, individuals have to agree on all levels of validity: “Consensus does not come about

thus “consolidate[s] a notion of communicative competence as the ground of agents’ ability to act as competent social beings, and thereby to constitute and maintain social relations” (Edgar 2005, 151).

The advantage of Habermas’s understanding of argument lies in his recognition that a claim’s social dimension supplies a force additional to that of mere isolated logical criticism. However, the logical structure that supports Habermas’s model hinders a multi-dimensional comprehension of arguments beyond “the narrow purview of ideal, argumentative speech” (Ingram 1987, 173). Instead, arguments as validity claims with illocutionary force remain confined to a formalised setting of debate that seems to be over-informed by scientific readings of argumentation and over-reliant on the force of truth and consensus for actual processes of communication. In other words, arguments in Habermas’s model of communication do not transcend the parameters of their creation. Habermas’s arguments, applying the metaphor of “organism” once more, relate to the discursive social world because they are developed based on the assumption that all meanings attached to them can potentially be identified. As a consequence, argumentation in Habermas’s understanding remains limited to a structure of logical criticism. On the one hand, this perspective helps to identify similar trends in nineteenth-century thinking.<sup>9</sup> On the other, it might be disadvantageous for a study of alternative forms of arguments beyond the formation of criticism, warrant and proof. Contrary to this rationality-centred model of arguments, Sullivan suggests that organisms, and thus arguments, might not be “consciously aware of all the meanings that inform their actions and beliefs” (Sullivan 2001, 26). Sullivan maintains that organisms relate to their environment in “a multitude of physical, social, political, and

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when, for example, a hearer accepts the *truth of assertion* but at the same time, doubts the sincerity of the speaker or the normative appropriateness of his utterance ...” (Habermas 1987, 121).

<sup>9</sup> Cronje draws on exactly these points to identify dialectical and rhetorical procedures “in the truth-seeking activities of real scientists” (Cronje 2002, 269). Her project parallels mine insofar as she takes Habermas’s insistence on the “functional synthesis” of rhetoric, dialectic and logic to understand discursive patterns in a “highly principled knowledge-building system” (ibid.) as science.



cultural environments” (158). Similarly, by restricting the functionality of arguments to a rational basis, it becomes impossible to perceive how debaters relate to the world through deliberation. While Sullivan speaks of skin as an organism as “more than a mere boundary ... as a site of transaction between inside and outside a body”, this chapter treats arguments as the “site” of discursive transaction—rational as well as nonrational.

### **Hypotheses and Induction: Scientific Discourse and the Logic of Argumentation**

Toulmin observes that “men such as Kepler, Newton, Lavoisier, Darwin and Freud have transformed not only our beliefs, but also our ways of arguing and our standards of relevance and proof: they have accordingly enriched the logic as well as the content of natural science” (Toulmin 2003, 237). Toulmin shows that, since the scientific revolution, scientific theory and popular discourse have been inseparably linked. By far the most revolutionary scientific turn in the nineteenth century, Darwin’s and Huxley’s ideas made a lasting impression on New Zealand’s history of ideas. In particular, Darwin’s theory on the origin of life was closely identified with the discourse of a universal scientific method. Scientific debate at the end of the nineteenth century developed a pragmatic naturalism that emphasised the practical applicability of logical patterns of reasoning and regarded as consistent what had an equivalent in nature, that is, in reality. Stenhouse illustrates that disciples of Darwin like Frederick W. Hutton, Professor T. Jeffrey Parker in Dunedin and Professor Algernon P.W. Thomas in Auckland were “outspoken evolutionists” (Stenhouse 1990, 429) and accordingly promoted core aspects of his theoretical framework in the colony.

Debating societies at the colleges often provided a venue for the contemplation of Darwin’s key arguments. In 1878, Hutton, then still in Dunedin, lectured to the society

on his favourite topic “The Origin of Life.”<sup>10</sup> A few evenings later, the students held a debate based on Hutton’s lecture. In 1880, someone read a paper on “Darwinism” at Canterbury College. The same year, Hutton now professor in Christchurch, gave a lecture on “Knowledge and how it is acquired.” No record survives, but it can safely be assumed that he shared his views on scientific inquiry with his students. The next year in Christchurch, Mr. Irving introduced the discussion on “Evolution.” At the close of the evening, fifteen students were against and nine were in favour of the proposition (MBL, *minute book*, 24 April 1881). The same year, Professor Parker in Dunedin opened the debating session with a lecture on “The Ancestry of Birds and their distinction from Reptiles” (OW, 4 June 1881, 22).<sup>11</sup> He summarised the principles of evolution, outlined the method of induction as central to any scientific explanation and left no doubt about his pro-Darwinian stance. In 1882, the Canterbury society held a session commemorating Darwin’s death. In 1890, Professor Bickerton (1842-1929) in Christchurch addressed the members of the society on “Modern Darwinism” (MBL, *minute book*, 30 Aug. 1890).<sup>12</sup> A few years later, Professor Thomas in Auckland delivered his annual lecture on “Evolution” (SCUA, *minute book*, 4 Sep. 1902) as requested by the members of the society (SCUA, *minute book*, 8 Aug. 1902).

In view of the number of lectures given to the three debating societies alone, partly explicitly requested by their members, it is impossible to understand the late-Victorians’ enthusiasm for infallible truths and their social application without noticing the impact

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<sup>10</sup> In 1876, he participated in a lecture series addressing the same issue. In 1878, an already excited and informed public presumably was satisfied with the newspaper coverage of this particular lecture. The *Evening Post*, the *ODT* and the *OW* reported on the evening: *ODT*, 3 August 1878, 2; *OW*, 10 August 1878, 16; *Evening Post*, 5 August 1878, 2.

<sup>11</sup> The following year, Parker lectured on “Charles Darwin” to the All Saints’ Literary and Debating Society (OW, 1 July 1882, 22).

<sup>12</sup> In 1874, Alexander William Bickerton, originally from England, came to New Zealand as founding professor for Chemistry at Canterbury College. In his capacity, he also gave public lectures with great success. In 1894, disputes at the College prompted Bickerton to improve the organisation of social life in Christchurch. As a follower of socialist ideas, he established a “Federative Home” at Wainoni that was based on the principles of communal life. Later in Bickerton’s life, Wainoni became a pleasure garden. Bickerton was also known for his cosmic theory, which was poorly received by contemporary scientists. During the Boer War, Bickerton openly attacked jingoism and “alienated much of his public support” (Parton DNZB). The biographical information is based on Parton in DNZB, Burdon 1956, Baker 2004.

Evolution and its epistemological foundation had. The Dialectic Society welcomed the addition of scientific topics to their already varied programme. At one of their meetings in 1898 two scientific essays were read and discussed: “one by Mr. Inglis on the ‘Solar System,’ and the other by Mr. Cradock on ‘Nature in Harness.’ Both proved exceedingly interesting, possessing in common the uncommon virtue of setting forth in an untechnical way facts new to the audience. ... [I]t is well that something of this sort should be introduced into the Dialectic programme” (*CCR*, Oct. 1898, 10). Debates, lectures and essays were always embedded in a network of cultural contexts that challenged and transcended supposedly scientific unequivocal facts. Conducive to this environment was a nineteenth-century understanding of science that was far removed from the present scientific divisions.

Francis Reid’s valuable and much needed study of the history and cultural context of science in general and the New Zealand Institute in particular, investigates what exactly colonial science amounted to in the unique and remote setting of New Zealand. Contrary to Stenhouse’s opinion that in the 1880s “colonial science” was a coherent concept and “that the colony’s scientific research and discussion” (Stenhouse 1999, 71-72) took place in the four main branches of the New Zealand Institute, Reid quite rightly points out that until now the understanding of nineteenth-century colonial science has rested on inadequate definitions. My research shows that scientific discourse was not confined to the domains of the Institute; instead, the reality of science in the nineteenth century amounted to an accumulation of science-labelled activities without little or no disciplinary and institutional boundaries:

The division between professionally paid and unpaid men of science did not correlate with the general acceptance or rejection of their work or with their intellectual standing. The labels ‘amateur’ and ‘professional’ do not describe the complex relations between scientific thinkers, and the title ‘scientist’, which was rarely used by contemporaries, is also unhelpful: because a cross section of the settler elite engaged in the development of science it is difficult for the historian

to know who should be included and who excluded by the label ‘scientist’. (Reid 2007, 5)

Moreover, for Reid, scientific thinking in New Zealand was international rather than national and avoided, due to a lack of precise definition, the exclusionary terminology of modern science (8). Dear in his work on the history of western science suggests the term “natural philosopher” to account for the unique combination of theoretical philosophy and practical science (Dear 2006, 2).<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the public image of science created by those involved in its practice, to a large extent, depended on individual ambitions. Utilitarian argumentation suited the cause when financial concerns had to be discussed; in order to elevate membership levels at the Institute, an egalitarian and liberal approach was emphasised (Reid 2007, 186). The middling strata of New Zealand’s society, a population that was literate, had access to self-improvement facilities like literary and debating societies and, above all, embraced mobility on grounds of strong ties with England, with recurrent frequency discussed scientific topics and—even more significantly—scientific methodology. Their discourse was ongoing and their interest in scientific method relentless. In other words, part of the New Zealand public was actively negotiating the separation of arts and science and coming to terms with how reliable scientific knowledge could be produced. Even though the New Zealand University as managing body of the colleges imposed scientific categorization on its teaching, Reid and Dear accurately depict the atmosphere of the wider public discourse on science in New Zealand.<sup>14</sup> Enthusiasm for and uncertainty about scientific

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<sup>13</sup> Dunlap, like Dear, shows that the term “scientist” came into use only in the second half of the nineteenth century: “strict usage, therefore, would require us to call Newton a ‘natural philosopher’ and Darwin a ‘naturalist’ (which is in fact what he was called and what he called himself)” (Dunlap 1999, 6). I acknowledge Dear’s and Dunlap’s argumentation and henceforth, the term “natural philosopher” will be used for New Zealand scholars who dealt with scientific-related issues.

<sup>14</sup> The typical division of the college curriculum prescribed a distinction of physical and natural science. Natural sciences included anatomy, physiology, zoology, botany, mineralogy and geology; the physical sciences consisted in heat and radiant heat, electricity and magnetism, sound and light, astronomy and meteorology (*NZUC*, 1880). The university’s system of order represented a transitory stage towards a twentieth- and twenty-first century canon of scientific subjects.

methodology are phrases that best describe the underlying dynamics of students' debates and lectures on Darwinism and related natural phenomena.<sup>15</sup>

In 1876, the recently arrived natural philosopher Frederick Wollaston Hutton (1836-1905) took part in a lecture series on scientific methodology and Evolution.<sup>16</sup> His fellow lecturers were all church men: the Anglican bishop Samuel Nevill and the Presbyterian Robert Gillies. Another clerical member, Rev. William Salmond, was among the audience. From the beginning, Hutton found himself in gross disagreement with Gillies, who gave the first lecture on Haeckel's *History of Creation* (1868)<sup>17</sup>, and Nevill, who held the closing lecture.<sup>18</sup> During the debate following Gillies's paper, Hutton argued with Salmond whether Evolution or the Special Creation Theory provided the better ground for explaining the global natural state of development. Salmond, clinging onto Special Creation theory, fiercely criticised Hutton's position in the course of the evening but announced afterwards that Hutton was capable of bringing "great knowledge out in a perfectly lucid and clear way, and convincing those who desire to pick holes almost against their will" (*ODT*, 19 October 1876, 2). Hutton, in his own contribution to the series, related his views on "The Inductive Method as Applied to the Theory of Descent." He combined Bacon's trial by crucial instances with Mill's method of difference in order to prove that only Evolution could account for the particularities

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<sup>15</sup> Stenhouse, moreover, points out that, in the case of Darwinism, Dunedin became the focus of attention. He concludes that "the far south almost monopolised evolutionary controversy suggests that New Zealand, though small, contained sufficient regional diversity to render problematic nationwide generalisations about science and religion" (Stenhouse 1999, 66).

<sup>16</sup> Biographical information on Hutton can be found in Chapter two. Hutton's fascination with and active contribution to the theory of evolution started very early in his career in 1860 with his review of Darwin's *Origin of Species* published in the British journal *Geologist*. Darwin was so pleased with Hutton's criticism that he wrote to him "congratulating him on 'the highly original, striking and condensed manner with which you have put the case. ... I am much pleased to see how carefully you have read my book, and, what is far more important, reflected on so many points with an independent spirit.'" (qtd. in Stenhouse 1990, 422)

<sup>17</sup> The lecture was entitled "The Pedigree of Man" (*OW*, 9 September 1876, 3).

<sup>18</sup> This information is based on Stenhouse 1990, 424-427, 1999, 73-75; *OW*: 2 September 1876, 3; 9 September 1876, 3 & 17; 30 September 1876, 3; *ODT*: 23 August 1876, 3; 20 September 1876, 3; 18 October 1876, 2-3; 19 October 1876, 2.

of New Zealand's flora and fauna.<sup>19</sup> The argument put forth Evolution as a hypothesis that could best account for New Zealand's natural phenomena. In conclusion, Hutton in 1876 combined the strictly inductive methodology of Bacon and Mill with the hypothetico-deductive approach<sup>20</sup> of Darwin. Moreover, his lecture demonstrated that he was a thorough naturalist who placed absolute confidence on the scientific reliability of observation.

Beginning with the foundation of the New Zealand University, students were exposed to the issue of induction.<sup>21</sup> In 1888, members of the Canterbury College Dialectic Society received their share of Hutton's scientific views when he delivered his retiring address as president of the society. In the lecture entitled *Scientific Theory: Old and New*, he talked about the failures of past scientists and the advances of modern scientific inquiry with regard to logical reasoning. Hutton argued that he and his contemporaries were better equipped to deliver valid scientific truths than their predecessors because new technologies had improved their quality of observation. Even beyond the uncontested supremacy of sciences in an industrial age, Hutton felt the need to explicitly elevate the method of induction to the highest ranks of scientific inquiry: "We must therefore have recourse to other means of verification, and we find this in the inductive method of logic, which as it can be applied to theories in every branch of

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<sup>19</sup> Mill's method of difference was based on Bacon's idea of crucial instance. Mill reasoned that a phenomenon A is under investigation in two different instances I and II. Both instances are exactly the same except for one characteristic. If A occurs in I and II, then, Mill concludes, that one characteristic is the effect, cause or necessary constituent of the cause of A (Mill 1891).

<sup>20</sup> The phrase is, in fact, a twentieth-century term that refers to those scientists who endorse hypotheses to arrive at explanation of specific phenomena. Snyder explains that hypothetico-deductive methodology essentially relies on two principles: "First is the claim that the only evaluative criterion for hypotheses is that they entail true empirical consequences. ... The second characteristic of hypothetico-deductivism involves a claim about how scientific hypotheses are to be invented or discovered. ... Indeed, on this view, hypotheses are typically characterised as resulting from nonrational guesswork" (Snyder 2007). Darwin's *Origin* was based on possibilities that were regarded by critics like Richard Owen (1804-1802) and Samuel Wilberforce (1805-1873) as guesswork and nonrational (Dear 2006, 102-104).

<sup>21</sup> The *New Zealand University Calendar* lists numerous examination questions on the topic. In 1879, for example, students sitting for the B.A. degree and the senior scholarship application were confronted with questions like: "What is the difference and the connection between Deductive and Inductive reasoning?" or "Classify the fallacies which may occur in the employment of the various Inductive methods." (NZUC, 1879, lxxx)

science, is commonly known as scientific method” (Hutton 1888, 8). Induction, as understood in nineteenth-century logic, described “the process of inferring a general law from the observation of particular instances” (*OED* s.v. “induction”). In 1881, Professor Parker, himself a Darwinist, in his lecture on birds and reptiles also defended a doctrine of scientific method “by which we arrive at all conclusions ... by induction and verification” (*OW*, 4 June 1881, 22). Alexander Bain defined induction in contrast to abstraction: “In abstraction, a *single* isolated property, or a collection of properties treated as a unity, is identified and generalised; under Induction, a conjunction, union, or concurrence of *two* distinct properties is identified” (Bain 1868, 143-144).<sup>22</sup> In other words, if the source of heat is the sun, if bodies expand in heat, then the proposition “the sun expands bodies” is an induction. Contrary to Bain’s seemingly uncontroversial definition and Hutton’s supposedly straight-forward depiction of induction as the fundamental scientific method, nineteenth-century natural philosophers disagreed strongly on the topic.

Hutton, early in his career was actually aware of the problems associated with a purely inductive method. In 1860, when still living in England, his favourable review of *Origin of Species* caused Darwin to reply to him:

Darwin was delighted with Hutton’s review. He wrote to his friend J.D. Hooker, the eminent botanist, that Hutton was ‘one of the very few who see that the change of species cannot be directly proved, and that the doctrine must sink or swim according ... as it groups and explains the phenomena.’ Hutton had correctly understood the hypothetico-deductive logic of the theory, and its formulator was pleased. (Stenhouse 1990, 422)

In other words, Hutton realised that Darwin had based his line of reasoning on (not yet) provable hypotheses.<sup>23</sup> Darwinism and, as a consequence, induction pointed towards a

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<sup>22</sup> Bain defined deduction only in conjunction with induction: “When an Inductive generality has been established, the application of it to new cases is called Deduction” (Bain 1868, 145).

<sup>23</sup> One hypothesis was that species “emerged through transformation from older species” (Dear 2006, 96), that the change from one species to another was gradual. The other was the principle of natural selection that found its way into Spencer’s Social Darwinism. What Darwin originally said was that “individual organisms routinely display slight variations as compared with others of the same species ... . These

conundrum for natural philosophers like Mill and Bain. Science was meant to exercise a rigorous regime of truth through induction, whereas simultaneously Evolution suggested that hypotheses offered the best available explanation of man's natural environment. Therefore, the straight inference from observation (the real) to generalised law (the abstract) was actually at jeopardy at the end of the Victorian era. In view of Hutton's strong Darwinian sentiment and his acknowledgement of the hypothetic-deductive approach, his insistence on induction as the true scientific method reflects a pragmatic perception of science characteristic of the New Zealand academic context.

Hutton's statement of 1888 further made clear that induction was coterminous with logic and predictability. Alexander Bain's work helps to enlighten this connection further. In the introduction of *Mental and Moral Science*, Bain identified two world-perspectives that informed the understanding of the principle of induction and in a wider context, reason: the object-world and the subject-world: "There is nothing that we can know, or conceive of, but is included under one or other of these two great departments. They comprehend the entire universe as ascertainable by us" (Bain 1868, 1). The paramount characteristic that distinguished object- from subject-world was extension. Bain accepted that the "object-experience is also in a sense mental" but the only scientifically permissible descriptions of the immaterial mental functions were feelings, volition and thought kept in the straightjacket of science. Bain's work suggests that he intended to transcend the Cartesian dichotomy of material and immaterial, body and soul, by means of a more elaborate framework of mind, brain, body and new psychological terminology. This initial self-imposed binary opposition of a subject-object-world confirms that he did not escape Descartes' ubiquitous presence. The entire book was dedicated to ascribing logical categories to something that otherwise had no extension, was thus immaterial and in empiricist terminology, accordingly

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variations usually correspond to some greater or lesser ability of the organism to cope with its circumstances of life ... " (ibid.).



unobservable. The only way the unobservable could be perceived, at least for Bain, was by a detour via the material. In connection with Hutton, this implied that induction as logical method was the closest one could come to casting an immeasurable but equally existent natural phenomenon into a tangible, perceivable mould. It was thus not surprising that Hutton in 1888 argued that correct and thorough observation served as a guarantor for proven scientific statements. Even if something seemed to be wholly unconnected to familiar occurrences and as nonrational as Darwin's hypotheses, thorough observation and generalisation would eventually provide the required proof of its existence and render it "real". For Hutton "the best of all tests is the fulfilment of predictions, because by this means we get rid of all personal bias in observing" (Hutton, 1888, 8). In other words, if a theory predicted future events then its validity had to be accepted even though an unobservable principle like the gradual transformation of species was at the root of it. By predicting the future, scientific theories acquired a God-like status and elevated man, their creator, to the ranks of the ideal. Scientific theories with the help of an infallible scientific methodology could achieve something that man alone could not: they could predict the unobservable future and capture the unobservable present. In 1888, Hutton was yearning for a level of objectivity that made science immune to failure.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> He had in fact developed a hierarchical methodological framework of scientific proof that incorporated Bacon's test of crucial instances and Mill's method of difference. According to Hutton, the inductive procedure by which absolute certainty was to be obtained consisted in two components: a five-stage method of arriving at a hypothesis and a four-step model of verifying that hypothesis; all in all, a highly formalised system of scientific argumentation. A hypothesis was established when facts were collected by observation. Instances of observation were moulded into an empirical law that attempted to propound a "mere statement of a sequence of phenomena without any explanation" (Hutton 1888, 8). This tentative statement would then be paraphrased by means of a hypothesis that had to be tested against rival hypotheses. With Bacon's "crucial instances" this working hypothesis could be tested for its likelihood to succeed logically. In 1876, for example, Hutton used the example of "the woodpecker of the La Plata pampas, which never so much as saw a tree" (Stenhouse 1990, 425) to demonstrate that Special Creation could not explain why the woodpecker existed in the first place. By checking the hypothesis against particular phenomena, it acquired certain real qualities. The hypothesis was "saying" something about the natural phenomena it related to. Eventually, it had to be verified in four steps: the method of difference, which compared the phenomenon with similar instances in which it did not occur; the proof against gradation, suggesting that the contested phenomenon actually passed into another, already familiar one; an explanation obtained by other hypotheses which were entirely different from the investigated

The two theorists who, in Hutton's eyes, could provide the required scheme of verification were Sir John Herschel (1792-1871) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873). Mill, in particular, excited the attention of the New Zealand scientific elite and university students. In 1880, in the examination of the senior scholarship for the New Zealand University, applicants had to answer the question: "Is it admissible (with Mill) to call an inference from Particulars to Particulars by the name of Induction?" (*NZUC*, 1880, lxxxix). William Carlile<sup>25</sup>—member of the New Zealand Institute like Hutton—read several papers contemplating Mill's epistemological system.<sup>26</sup> As for Hutton, consistency seemed to be Carlile's preferred reprimand of contemporary science. His lecture of 1891 began with the exclamation that "to find anything like consistency, indeed, he [the scholar] would have to go back to the philosophers of the pre-Kantian age" (Carlile 1891b, 644). Carlile criticised Mill for his "hair-splittings and inconsistencies" (645); Alexander Bain<sup>27</sup> was equally quickly discarded for not being coherent in his logical approach. Carlile, very much like Hutton, was interested in a clear-cut system for logic that knew only two classes: "truths of pure mathematics", of everything abstract, and "truths of matter of fact" (*ibid.*), in other words, truths of experience.

The fact that Carlile, on the one hand, was interested in a simple logical system, and on the other, appalled by Mill's apparent inconsistencies was not entirely surprising in

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phenomenon; and finally the proof of prediction, which in essence meant that a valid hypothesis was sound if it could predict future occurrences.

<sup>25</sup> Nothing is known about William Carlile except that he was an ordinary member of the Wellington New Zealand Institute.

<sup>26</sup> In 1887, Carlile as a new member began his scientific lectures with accounts of "some deep-seated fallacies" quoting Aristotle and Plato in order to arrive at Huxley's evolutionist concept. In 1891, Carlile felt confident enough to offer a thorough analysis of Mill's opinion on "necessary truths." Only three years later, Carlile's paper on "The Humist Doctrine of Causation in its Relation to Modern Agnosticism" caused considerable debate among members of the Institute in Wellington because the argument became entangled in religious implications of mind as the supreme force in nature (*TPNZI*, 1894, 646). In 1895, Carlile came back to the same question—what is the mind—only to set it into a large social and political context (Carlile 1895). Carlile's texts were exemplary of a nineteenth-century tendency to, on the one hand, discriminately set apart science and ordinary existence; and, on the other, apply principles of "natural law" in everyday circumstances.

<sup>27</sup> For a discussion of Alexander Bain's works and their impact on nineteenth-century New Zealand debate see Chapter four.

view of Mill's complex work. Donovan points out that Mill's views on induction were connected to his lifelong project to combine Newton's mechanistic laws and scientific certainty with normative implications in order to make sense of social developments in British society. "Mill directed his studies towards discovering a way to apply the laws of Newtonian science to what he liked to call the 'moral sciences,' a term that reflects not so much a conviction as a hope, and perhaps an expectation, of what the study of man and his institutions might become" (Donovan 1981, 182). Mill, to this extent, exemplified all that was universal in the notion of late nineteenth-century natural philosophy. Indeed, the separation of science and philosophy was established only in the second half of the century. For mid-nineteenth-century scientists and/or natural philosophers "doing things and understanding things thus became increasingly folded into one" (Dear 2006, 11). Mill found himself in the middle of this process. Mill insisted on the paramount function of truth for human society and his *System of Logic* was designed to clarify the formal side of this key factor. His conviction, however, was not immutable and his confrontation with the natural philosopher William Whewell (1794-1866), a debate that was later reviewed in New Zealand, revealed inconsistencies.

The Mill-Whewell debate exemplified the dichotomy between the real and the unreal and the rational and nonrational. Mill, according to Snyder, rejected those aspects of inductive reasoning that accepted conclusions about unobservable phenomena. William Whewell embraced induction, accepting the possible existence of the unobservable. Because he agreed that scientists could generate knowledge about phenomena that they could not observe, Whewell, unlike Mill, could formulate claims about potentially unperceivable entities like molecules and light waves (Snyder 1997, 1). As a consequence, Whewell was frequently accused of accepting "nonrational guesswork" (2) as the foundation for his scientific inquiries because the notion of experiment and observation was inseparable from the belief in scientific facts. Snyder

and Jacobs show that Whewell was not placing undue confidence on hypotheses derived from other sources than fact but that he was, in fact, accounting for the possibility of unobservable causes. Mill was, to say the least, not clear on the notion of unknown causes, which, for him, were “synonymous with ‘fictitious’” (Jacobs 1991, 75):

Mill criticizes Whewell for allowing ‘no logical process in any case of induction, other than . . . guessing until a guess is found which tallies with the facts.’ Mill is *not* objecting to the method of conjecture, but to Whewell’s (supposed) failure to deal adequately with conditions of verification” (83).

In other words, scientific intelligibility was determined, for Mill, by the way arguments are proven. According to him, hypotheses could be verified, but Mill did not pinpoint “how hypotheses about *unobservables*, whether (in his view) ‘known’ or ‘unknown,’ are proven” (77). Likewise the transition from “unknown” to “known” remained unclear. Mill’s difficulties with hypotheses did not spring from a rejection of hypotheses *per se* but rather from an unremitting belief in the intelligibility of scientific inquiry. For Mill, science did not take the path of Aristotle’s teleological attempts of clarifying why natural phenomena went a certain way. On the contrary, science, since the scientific revolution, had addressed the question how natural phenomena progressed.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, Whewell’s idea that unknown and unobserved causes could explain how something in the real world occurred was unacceptable to Mill. Something that could not be observed in the first place, could not serve as a basis for further inquiry into the nature of its development. In the New Zealand context, Hutton, Parker, Thomson and Carlile, like Mill, did not reject hypotheses but they rejected the possibility of hypotheses that were based on the unknown.

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<sup>28</sup> Peter Dear in *The Intelligibility of Nature* traces the idea of intelligibility in science. For the conflict between the Aristotelian and the mechanical understanding of science see especially 16-24.

Donovan shows that Mill was aware that logic presented only one aspect of knowledge production. He makes clear that Mill was unable to traverse the gulf between scientific standards of truth and social constituents of human existence:

However profound or universal it may turn out to be, truth has no inherent power by which it can command assent from men's minds; nor are men's minds naturally equipped with any special faculty for discerning truth. Such truth as mankind processes owes more to exceptional insight than to any systematic process whatever, although the law of induction can provide a regular and systematic account of what has already taken place without their aid. (Donovan 1981, 187)

Mill, it appears, was acutely aware of the difficulties connected with the application of inductive reasoning in social contexts. In later life, in his critical essays on poets like Coleridge he confirms that the "noisy conflict of half-truths" and "antagonist modes of thought" (qtd. in 187) are the foundation of the power of truth. In *On Liberty* Mill also maintained that truth did not "naturally recommend itself to mankind": "It is a piece of idle sentimentality that truth, merely as truth, has any inherent power denied to error of prevailing against the dungeon and the stake" (qtd. in 188).

In 1881, the Dunedin student Ebenezer S. Hay (? – 1887) identified Mill's sentiment in his own study of Wordsworth.<sup>29</sup> He applied Mill's doubts to his own increasing scepticism on the relation of religion and science:

[H]e [Mill] remarked that the more their views (utilitarianism) prospered, there would be more need of Wordsworth. Poetry that blossoms in fields so widely apart must strike its roots deep in the human affections,

In this iron time  
Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears,

When a deadly warfare is raging between science and religion, there are those, confident in the result, can lose themselves in Wordsworth and forget it .... (Hay 1881, 13)

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<sup>29</sup> Ebenezer S. Hay's essay was the first contribution to a New Zealand debating society that I have found. Little is known of his life. As a practising lawyer in Dunedin he published poetry under the nom de plume "Fleta". The only biographical sketch in the *Otago Witness* suggested that his death was untimely and his life characterised by his passion for poetry ("Biographical: Fleta" in *OW*, 27 May 1887, 28).

For Hay, art offered an escape from binary oppositions like science versus religion, material versus immaterial, real versus unreal or rational versus nonrational. For other students the getaway was provided by a fascination with the unreal and the unobservable in the form of magic lanterns, spiritualism or telepathy.

### **Mental Science and the Passion for the Unobservable**

Complementary to science-informed logic, debate in New Zealand was influenced by a paradigm that enhanced immeasurable and unobservable qualities. When people like Hutton, Parker, Thomson or von Haast wanted to base inquiry on a secure footing, others embraced inexplicable phenomena as the backdrop for their discourse. People in Britain, America and New Zealand dealt with the mind as object of investigation to an increasing extent. The emergence of psychology as a discipline in its own right, the interest in phenomena like telepathy, hypnosis or spiritual mediums gave shape to their passion for everything outside the sphere of tangible phenomena. In New Zealand, the scientific component of arguments was challenged by an assembly of supposedly supernatural or inexplicable technologies and phenomena. However, their impact was limited and by the end of the new century, induction had superseded hypothetico-deductive notions of argumentation.

Students in New Zealand were confronted with ‘evidence’ of the unobservable that was a combination of supernatural spectacle, technical display and scientific curiosity. Students in Christchurch were particularly interested in discussing Spiritualism and hypnosis. The debate of 1881 on the question: “Is belief in spirituality entirely founded on delusion?” (MBL, *minute book*, 30 July 1881) was decided in the negative by a majority of one. The following year students attempted to clarify whether “Science is incompetent to explain the well authenticated experiences of Spiritualism?” (MBL, *minute book*, 9 Sept. 1882). This time the audience decided by a large majority that

science had the capacity to account for these phenomena. In 1891, in the ensuing debate to Robert Laing's paper on hypnosis, students were sure "that the facts of hypnotism are not explicable by any known natural or scientific law" (MBL, *minute book*, 16 May 1891). Another component of the unobservable proved to be the notion of telepathy or thought transference. In 1884, after hearing Robert Laing's paper on "Thought Transference," students agreed, with a significant majority, "that there is sufficient evidence to show that thoughts can be transferred from brain to brain without the use of any of the five senses" (MBL, *minute book*, 27 Sept. 1884).<sup>30</sup>

In 1894, Marion S. W. White at Otago University College came back to the topic of Spiritualism and wrote an article on "A Spiritualist Séance."<sup>31</sup> In her account she expressed the wish "to embrace the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the mental science of South Australia" (White 1894, 135). She had received an invitation by the Adelaide Psychological Society, formerly the Adelaide Spiritualists' Society, to attend a 'meeting'. Announcements of séances and demonstrations of thought transference by "Psychological" societies were also common in New Zealand newspapers. Based on her experiences in Australia, White described the entire evening as a mixture of religious ritual and private performance.<sup>32</sup> She emphasised her role as an eyewitness. She not only wanted to become "acquainted" with spiritualist procedures, she wanted to observe: "For some time we had been *watching* as well as we could in the dim light the contortions of a tall man directly opposite us" (135, italics mine). After observing the outbursts of several members, White professed: "Business, so to speak, now became brisk; indeed, so brisk that we felt as if we had *seen enough* of spiritualism for one

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<sup>30</sup> In 1885, Laing gave the same paper to the Christchurch branch of the New Zealand Institute (TPNZI, 1885, 425).

<sup>31</sup> Neither *Southern People* nor *DNZB* provide any biographical background on White. In 1888, Marion White won the prize essay of the debating society. Page mentions White as "a first-year student who would feature largely in the publication [of the *Review*] throughout her student days" (Page 1992, 108).

<sup>32</sup> Concluding her remarks she wrote: "Apparently, then, this exhibition takes the place of a religious service; this cult is to them instead of a religion" (White 1894, 137).

evening” (136, italics mine). Considering the already poor visual conditions, the evening took an unexpected turn, “a young spiritualist turned the lamp very low, leaving the room so dark that we could distinguish nothing except the outlines of the figures” (136-137). White described her relief at leaving the séance room with the words: “we found ourselves under the *pure* high South Australian *stars*” (137, italics mine). White might have felt almost polluted by the poor artificial lighting conditions in that room and the natural glow of stars reconciled her spirits.

White significantly combines her visual impressions with comparisons to technical inventions in order to depict the scene that took place in front of her:

But Peter [a ghost] seemed to feel much as an honest countryman does the first time he tried to speak through a telephone. The instrument is there, the other man is there to listen, but what on earth is he to say? His inhospitable cut at us seemed to exhaust his inventive powers, and though he scrawled over a few more yards of paper, the medium was fain to confess that he said nothing more. (White 1894, 136)

The members of the society were moreover “performers” who excited the attention of an “audience” and she did not know whether “the performers themselves believe in their own performance” (137). White’s report shows how new technical apparatuses were used to perceive and describe the unobservable and how the terminologies of leisure and entertainment helped to unravel the relation of rational and nonrational, natural and supernatural, real and unreal.

The nineteenth-century use of the magic lantern and photography is possibly the best technical manifestation of late-Victorian interest in observation of the real and the unreal. Not only were the last outposts of the unknown used to circumscribe scientific methodology but also technological inventions reinforced the magical element in debate and lectures. The fascination with the unknown was reflected in a passionate interest in the unseen, in the spectacle. The magic lantern in an academic and educational environment very tamely transformed science into spectacle. Simon During, for



example, analyses how optical inventions such as magic lanterns and photography influenced the perception of spiritual phenomena (During 2002, 259-287). Morus highlights science as spectacle and observes that optical illusions in general were part of the late-Victorian obsession with “seeing and believing science” (Morus 2006, 101).<sup>33</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century the use of magic lantern slides had become common in lectures to the debating societies as well as the larger public.<sup>34</sup> Compare the following newspaper comment on Dr. Don’s lecture to the Otago debating society:

The lecture was illustrated by a large number of magic lantern views from photographs taken mainly in the alpine districts of New Zealand and in Colorado. Towards the end of the lecture several pairs of views were shown, taken before and after the Tarawera eruption, and the whole change on the face of the country thus illustrated was almost incredible. (*OW*, 28 May 1896, 36)<sup>35</sup>

Photography attempted to make visible the un-experienced and unseen. In bringing “proof” of natural phenomena to the lecture room, images conveyed a sense of the scientific real; they transplanted the audience’s eyes to the place of spectacle and made them bear witness to “incredible” circumstances.

Morus quotes the natural philosopher David Brewster to illustrate the significance of human vision for the understanding of the role of observation in science:

According to Brewster, the eye was ‘the most remarkable and the most important’ organ for understanding the relationship between mind and matter.

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<sup>33</sup> Fred Nadis in *Wonder Shows* analyses a similar paradigm but focuses specifically on the magical power of science in connection with the American spiritualist movement (Nadis 2005, 113-137).

<sup>34</sup> In 1894, The *Otago University Review* was proud to recall the use of magic lantern images in a lecture on Northern Italy: “Professor Gibbons, M.A., then conducted his audience through the larger towns of Northern Italy. His lecture was illustrated by upwards of 36 lantern views. ... under the able guidance of the lecturer, the audience were carried along with an interest that never flagged. ... The lantern was well managed by Messrs Marden and Boydell, and the thanks of the society are especially due to Mr. Wilkinson, of the School of Mines, for the large amount of time and trouble that he spent in the preparation of the slides” (*OUR*, Aug. 1894, 78). Graham mentions the phenomenon in her study of New Zealand settler society: “Notice of scientific and literary lectures would arouse ‘great expectations’ of their speakers; sessions illustrated with lantern slides were a popular form of entertainment for all sections of the population” (Graham 1992, 133).

<sup>35</sup> Mt. Tarawera is close to Rotorua on the North Island of New Zealand. The Tarawera eruption lasted four days in June 1886 and was a geological event that drew the attention of the scientific as well as general public (Bradshaw 1888, 213-225). Bradshaw quoted von Hochstetter (a reknown scientist and a close friend of von Haast) who was an eye witness to the event: “During two clear nights I watched the eruption from these vents, and could distinguish them against the sky with a *powerful binocular telescope*; but I never observed any illumination of the ascending steamclouds ....” (qtd. in 219, *italics mine*). Tarawera became the focus of national attention because reports like von Hochstetter’s made it seem real even for those who read about it in the remote parts of the country.

As he expressed it, the eye was ‘the sentinel which guards the pass between the worlds of matter and spirit, and through which all their communications are interchanged.’ (Morus 2006, 102)<sup>36</sup>

With the invention of photography, the function of the eye as mediator between matter and spirit was obscured by the introduction of an additional level of perception. What the eye could not perceive directly, the camera could capture and the magic lantern could project.

The late-Victorian focus on observation, at least in New Zealand, nevertheless subtly differentiated between magic lantern imagery and Spiritualist photography. On the one hand, the public acceptance of magic lantern slides as scientific proof and illustration (like Dr. Don’s images) accepted the technical superiority of the camera but still trusted visual perception. On the other hand, photographs as confirmation of the existence of the supernatural denied the supposedly manipulative intervention of the photographer and the responsibility of the mechanical apparatus that took them. Cortés-Rocca in her analysis of spectre photographs maintains that responsibility for the pictures was ascribed to an entity beyond the control of the machine or the cameraman: “It would seem then that photographic ghosts were subjects with the power to appear in the images rather than objects of representation. Thus, ‘spirit photography’ refers to the photographs produced by spirits, rather than to the ensemble of images in which they are represented” (Cortés-Rocca 2005, 156). As a consequence, magic lantern shows represented one end of the spectrum of the unobservable that still assumed the reciprocity of matter and spirit, of the material outside and the immaterial inside, and above all the reliability of visual perception. Images of the supernatural instead transcended this paradigm of observation and split open the relation of matter and spirit

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<sup>36</sup> A similar sentiment surfaces in William Paley’s work on English natural theology. He ascribed to the eye such a complex and perfect design that only God could have created it. Human vision was not only a question of matter and spirit; it also addressed issues of divine creation. Moreover, Darwin acknowledged Paley’s influence on his early work but eventually rejected Paley’s perspective: “he [Darwin] recoiled in horror from the idea that God had expressly designed the ichneumon wasp to lay its eggs inside the body of a living caterpillar for its larvae to devour when they hatched.” (Stenhouse 1990, 437) On Paley’s impact on Darwin also see Dear 2006, 93-94.

by introducing an unknown element that questioned the scientific validity of human sight.<sup>37</sup> The implementation of photographic technology in the New Zealand cultural sphere challenged the scientific beliefs so effectively propagated by natural philosophers because the inductive argument—the human eye cannot see ghosts, the camera captures what the eye perceives, therefore a photograph cannot show ghosts—did not apply. The technicalities of photography accordingly must have appeared to Victorians infinitely more complex than rational worldviews suggested.

The enthusiastic interest of students in questions of spiritualism, telepathy and hypnosis similarly points towards a desire to clarify what was according to prevalent doctrine not accountable. In 1993, Ellwood published the only comprehensive study of New Zealand alternative spiritualism. Together with Lineham he acknowledges that the heyday of nineteenth-century Spiritualism coincided with a new emphasis on Rationalism, and, I would add, inductive thinking, in the 1870s and 1880s (Ellwood 1993, 4; Lineham 1985). Séances, lectures, and debates on spiritualism, hypnosis and telepathy were very much *en vogue* in New Zealand.<sup>38</sup> Ellwood mentions that in the 1860s, Spiritualism in New Zealand first appeared in Dunedin and prompted the establishment of the Spiritual Investigation Society that resembled the Society for Psychical Research in England.<sup>39</sup> Even though spiritualist experiences escaped any standards of scientific intelligibility, they have proven remarkably resistant to rationalist criticism.<sup>40</sup> Stenhouse points out that in the nineteenth century “New Zealand did not

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<sup>37</sup> Derrida in *Specters of Marx* maintains that “the specter is a paradoxical incorporation, the becoming-body, a certain phenomenal and carnal form of the spirit. It becomes, rather, some ‘thing’ that remains difficult to name: neither soul nor body, and both one and the other” (Derrida 1994, 6).

<sup>38</sup> The “American connection” was established by several notable spiritualists. In 1873, the American Spiritualist J.M. Peebles and E.C. Dunn publicly practised their mediumship in the colony (Ellwood 1993, 32-35). The same year, John Duff in Auckland published his reply to Rev. Hill’s lecture on Spiritualism, insisting on a scientific investigation of mediums and séance sessions (Duff 1873). In 1878 and 1879 Emma Hardinge-Britten, for example, an Anglo-American Spiritualist lectured in Australia and New Zealand (Ellwood 1993, 35-36).

<sup>39</sup> Ellwood 1993, 30.

<sup>40</sup> Ellwood mentions that in 1986 the New Zealand census “yielded 2,679 self-professed adherents of the Spiritualist church, up from 2,403 in 1981 and only 1,725 in 1976” (Ellwood 1993, 250 n1) Compared

have anything like the same social pressures for purely nominal religious conformity that Britain had” (Stenhouse 1985, 46).

Recently, numerous scholars have traced the cultural impact of telepathy, hypnosis and mesmerism as well as spiritualism in Britain and America.<sup>41</sup> Carroll sets out to “make sense” of American Spiritualism in the 1840s and 1850s and approaches Spiritualists as “rational people in search of a religion that answered their religious questions and satisfied their spiritual needs” (Carroll 1997, 2). Furthermore, he analyses Spiritualist societies in connection with the political atmosphere of republican freedom and romantic individualism. Owen focuses on the role of women in the rise of Spiritualism in Victorian England. Thurschwell examines the studies of paranormal phenomena by the Society of Psychical Research and concludes that they were perceived in the context of a model of evolving communication. Thought transference and “leaps of knowledge and affect are often imagined in terms of simultaneously supernatural, technological and spatial connections” (Thurschwell 2001, 149). Unlike the telegraph that demonstrated the technical superiority of the age, telepathy could bridge distance without technological interference. Lockhurst in particular demonstrates how the study of telepathy was linked to Victorian maturing science, literature and popular culture, in particular, through the work of the Society of Psychical Research.<sup>42</sup> He shows that the enthusiasm for telepathy was based on a fusion of cultural influences

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with America, “the fundamentals of Spiritualism, clairvoyance and voice mediumship, remain firmly in place in Spiritualist churches throughout New Zealand” (28). Stenhouse ascertains that in 1874, “less than one quarter of the population attended church ... and the proportion of regular attenders never rose above 30 percent during the entire nineteenth century” (Stenhouse 1999, 64).

<sup>41</sup> Carroll 1997, Lockhurst 2002, Thurschwell 2001, Owen 2004, Bown et al. 2004.

<sup>42</sup> Lockhurst, like Thurschwell, shows how imperialism and the records of the Society of Psychical Research suggest that the strict notions of telepathic instances and scientific verification did not apply to the periphery of the Empire (Lockhurst 2002, 154-160). He uses an essay on ‘Thought-Reading’ published by the Society of Psychical Research in 1882 to illustrate this point for New Zealand: “The second was told by Thomas Woolner, sculptor and one of the founding members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, who had been stricken in Oxford Street by the thought of a friend in New Zealand, a thought that oppressed him for over two hours. ‘And surely when the next mail or the next mail but one arrived, there came the horrible news that at that very day and hour (*allowance being made for longitude*) his friend had been made prisoner by the natives of New Zealand, and put to slow death by frightful tortures.’” (154)

that went beyond the confines of scientific observation into the realms of imperial politics, women's rights and gothic literature. The fascination with psychic phenomena like telepathy arose from an increasing tension between a technical reality and a spiritual worldview. Richardson in his study of *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind* makes transparent the connections between early brain science and the literary works of the English Romantics.<sup>43</sup> All of these authors observe that “key tenets of the new psychology were seeping into the mainstream, helping to transform notions of subjectivity, of culture, and of character” (Richardson 2001, 93). The problems surrounding the relation between mind and matter and the new scientific focus on researching the human brain helped to shift the belief in the ideal towards a materialistic and analytical framework for understanding human nature.

Members of the New Zealand Institute employed phrases like “mysterious therapeutic agent”<sup>44</sup> and “mind-stuff” to describe phenomena like hypnosis and thought transference. The foundation of the Canterbury dialectic society coincided with a controversy about the dualism of mind and matter in the New Zealand Institute. In 1879, Frederick Frankland read a paper before the Wellington Philosophical Society that prompted a controversy that lasted until 1881<sup>45</sup>. Frankland's paper was entitled “On the Doctrine of Mind-Stuff” and dealt with Psychology as the only “concrete science” (Frankland 1879, 205). Frankland argued that “all the properties of material objects, as

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<sup>43</sup> Patricia Murphy (2006) studies science's impact on the construction of women in texts outside the traditional canon of nineteenth-century literature.

<sup>44</sup> Two years earlier, E. A. Mackechnie focused on the therapeutic qualities of hypnosis in his paper “A Mysterious Therapeutic Agent” (1889). His paper revealed a sympathetic reading of the phenomenon. He quoted *The Nineteenth Century* as the source of his critical information – a magazine that students in New Zealand had access to. Mackechnie not only dealt with hypnosis but scrutinised “extraordinary cures, famous séances, and wonderful clairvoyant visions” (Mackechnie 1889, 122). The article made clear that Mackechnie relied on scientific inquiry to cast light on processes of hypnosis. He pointed out that psychology was still perceived in a rather hostile fashion and concluded that “surely such persons err. The reverent study of the glorious perfection of Creative Will is man's true homage. He therein recognises, however imperfect the revelation may be, some of the attributes of the universal man” (128). For Mackechnie, scientific methodology advanced knowledge of the human condition and helped capture mechanisms of the mind in a practical, empiricist and rational way. Science, for Mackechnie, elevated man rather than degrades him by association with his primeval origin.

<sup>45</sup> Richmond 1879; Thomson 1881.

investigated by the physical sciences, are capable of being analysed into possibilities of feeling, or relations among possibilities of feeling” (205). As a consequence, he concluded that the only “concrete realities” or “things-in-themselves” were reducible to sensual perceptions, hence superior stance among the sciences. In his lecture, Frankland disestablished the traditional separation of mind and matter by postulating that everything was “mind-stuff”. He insisted that there were not any “*intelligences* unconnected with any brain” and that “the supposed dualism of matter and spirit is an illusion” (Frankland 1879, 215). One of Frankland’s objectives was to deconstruct and reject the “essence of spiritualism and theology” (ibid.) and to embrace the fact that the theory of mind-stuff complemented the mechanistic worldview. Frankland’s ideas might appear obscure and far-fetched but the concept of “mind-stuff” and more importantly the solution to the mind-matter problem were seriously discussed in New Zealand.

His critics Richardson and Thomson opposed Frankland’s view. In particular, Thomson focused on the dualism of reason and emotion. His statements encapsulated a sentiment representative of New Zealand’s scientific stance and scholarly insistence on the reliability of induction. In rejecting the notion that all is feeling, Thomson maintained that “a higher faculty informs us of the contrary. This faculty we call reason, and which is seldom at one with our feelings, but more often at variance; further, sometimes in diametrical opposition” (Thomson 1881, 109). Thomson illustrated his opinion with the example that “feelings tell us that the sun has risen” when in fact reason shows us that it is “atmospheric refraction creating the deception” (ibid.). Thomson here equated feelings with mistaken observations which rational intervention could correct. In the following passage he moreover summarises the elements that I have identified as contributing to the notion of the unreal:

And to the ideal part of man's nature I give incomparably the higher place. It is by this ideal or ethereal nature that man weighs the sun as it were in balance; that he predicts by many years the position of the stars in the heavens; that he anticipates eclipses and other astronomical phenomena; that he scientifically navigates the great ocean, and that he by his designs overcomes space and time by the railway and electric telegraph. Thus man is gifted with an attribute far outside of gross narrow feeling, as truthful and transcendent in its comprehensiveness as the latter is misleading and misguiding. ... This gift of mental conception places man in his pre-eminent position in nature, and is that ethereal part of his being which being truthful is undying and immortal. (Thomson 1881, 110)

Thomson, to give his claim scientific validity, drew heavily on what Hutton called "the best of all tests," that is, prediction, "because by this means we get rid of all personal bias in observing" (Hutton 1888, 8). Moreover, Marion White's statement that the stars in the South Australian sky had a soothing effect on her when leaving the séance in Adelaide acquires an even more fundamental meaning in connection with Thomson's statement. The stars represented to her the counterpart to artificial light and spectacle; they implied truthfulness and reality. Susan Wells in *Sweet Reason* employs a similar metaphor to describe the reassuring force of natural laws for public discourse: "If the starry skies above us no longer proclaim what is true about the natural world, there is no moral law which speaks reliably within us about how we ought to act in the domain of the social" (Well 1996, 182). Marion White felt this "reassuring force" of the real, the natural, when stepping outside the séance apartment.

The last instance of the manifestation of scientific spirit and the contemplation of the unobservable that shall be dealt with in this chapter is the introduction of mental science and philosophy to the curriculum of the three colonial colleges in New Zealand. Sinclair describes the subject as "a mixture of logic, ethics, and psychology" (Sinclair 1983, 79); a description that misses the cultural context in which it arose. Turtle tracks the development of mental science and philosophy in an Australasian context and discovers that in comparison to Britain's late academic acceptance of psychology "its Australasian counterpart may be seen as a relatively more significant protagonist in the

early regional development of these disciplines” (Turtle 1988, 224). Mental Science in New Zealand at least was compulsory for gaining a B.A., B.Sc., Honours, M.A. and Master of Science degree since the foundation of the New Zealand University as an administrative body.<sup>46</sup> The subject comprised logic, psychology, ethics and history of philosophy. Examination papers throughout the years required students to write one paper in psychology or ethics and another in deductive and inductive logic. The subject was made redundant only in the mid-twentieth century when it was replaced by psychology.<sup>47</sup> The subject’s history represents remarkably well how the late-Victorian fusion of scientific methodology and explanations of the unobservable gained a foothold in New Zealand middle-class society.

From 1870 to 1886, Duncan MacGregor in Dunedin was professor of Mental and Moral Philosophy, a chair that was the result of a compromise between the Presbyterian Church and the city’s interests. The arrangement consisted in the church paying MacGregor’s salary and the College ensuring his academic standard (Sullivan 2005, 30). MacGregor, when accepting the post, maintained that knowledge was relative and that he was particularly interested in “our mental phenomena and the accompanying molecular movements in the nerve centres” (qtd. in Morrell 1969, 39). In Scotland, he had supplemented his degree in philosophy with a qualification in medicine. In 1886, he became, with the help of his friend and former student Robert Stout, Inspector-General of Lunatic Asylums, Hospitals and Charitable institutions in New Zealand, combining his work with an outspoken support for the scientific investigation of the mentally ill (Morrell 1969, 41).<sup>48</sup> Under his influence, mental philosophy acquired a considerable medical focus.

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<sup>46</sup> See: *NZUC* 1879 – 1902.

<sup>47</sup> After 1957, psychology became an independent subject at Auckland (Sinclair 1983, 202).

<sup>48</sup> With respect to MacGregor’s scientific approach towards treatment of the mentally ill, it is worth considering how, in the United States, magic lantern images became part of the moral treatment at hospitals and soul asylums (Haller and Larsen 2005). Even though beyond the scope of this thesis, the



MacGregor's position in Dunedin was by no means uncontroversial. Again, Dunedin proved to be the breeding ground of dissent. In 1878, he published an article in favour of Social Darwinism in the *New Zealand Magazine* and subsequently found himself in the middle of a controversy with Rev. Copland, a dispute that lasted until MacGregor's resignation in 1885 (Sullivan 2005, 45). Rev. Copland, who considered Social Darwinism insufferable, criticised MacGregor, using rather impolite language. As a consequence, the controversy caused a clash of religious and scientific beliefs among members of the Otago University Council that questioned MacGregor's position as chair of mental and moral philosophy.<sup>49</sup> Even though the Copland-MacGregor case was publicly seen as a farce (46), the Hutton lecture series of 1876 displayed a similar friction that only ended amicably because of Hutton's well-mannered eloquence. Dunedin's university staff publicly promoted science, and in particular Darwinism, as a benchmark for dealing with daily affairs.<sup>50</sup> In MacGregor's case, he held that the human psyche (the unobservable) was best explored by medical investigation. Spiritual concerns had to conform to empiricist logic and methodology.

The later notorious Joseph Penfound Grossmann was among the first students in Canterbury to graduate with a degree in Mental Science. In 1906, he became professor of the same subject at Auckland University after the chair had been neglected for sixteen years (Sinclair 1983, 79). In 1901, the *New Zealand Illustrated Magazine* maintained that since 1890, "the departure of Professor Posnett Political Science and Mental Science have practically ceased to be taught at the Auckland College, and the Council is at present unable, owing to the want of funds, to institute regular lectures in

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fusion of lantern shows and moral reformation in medical institutions should be worth exploring for a New Zealand context.

<sup>49</sup> For another confrontation (1876) on the issue of religion and evolution between Rev. Copland and Rev. A. R. Fitchett at the YMCA in Dunedin see Stenhouse 1999, 66-68. For Stenhouse's view on the Copland-MacGregor controversy see Stenhouse 1999, 69-70.

<sup>50</sup> Up until 1891, for example, Huxley's and Martin's "Practical Biology" was the required textbook (AUCC 1884, 1887-1891).

those important subjects” (*NZIM*, Nov. 1901, 138). In reviewing the examination questions, Sinclair maintains and the *Calendars* confirm that mental science combined experimental science with philosophy with “much emphasis on definitions of a dilemma, enthymeme, inference, deduction, induction, and so on” (Sinclair 1983, 85). He also acknowledges that papers on logic suggested the influence of John S. Mill. All in all, Grossmann’s teachings seemed to draw heavily on his studies in Canterbury under Brown who emphasised Mill and Bain. Sinclair also notes that “a concern for ‘animal rights’” (84) was in fashion. Comparative papers on the animal and human mind were in fact frequent contributions to the *TPNZI* and daily newspapers addressed the concerns of groups like the Society for the prevention of cruelty to animals.<sup>51</sup>

In the 1880s, at Canterbury College, where Professor Macmillan Brown held the chair, the subject combined linguistics, literary theory, logic, early psychological research and philosophy. His version of mental science was most likely influenced by Alexander Bain’s work on *Mental and Moral Science* of 1868.<sup>52</sup> One question in the Honours Examination of 1879, for example, required students to “Distinguish and Compare the provinces of Imagination and Logic” (*CCC*, 1880, xxvi). In 1882, Professor Brown listed the following questions for the pass examination of Mental Science and Logic:

- 4) Illustrate the fallacies that arise from the use of metaphorical language ...
- 6) How is deduction related to induction, and what different views have been taken of the relation? ...
- 11) What is meant by connotative names, quantification of the predictable, enthymeme, indirect mood, and immediate inference? (*CCC*, 1883, xxxi)

Brown’s instructions suggest that he was imposing on his students the difference between predictable knowledge production by recourse to clear methodology and

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<sup>51</sup> In *TPNZI* see for example Carlile 1891a, and Purnell 1896, 1899. For articles on animal issues see Papers Past: keywords Vegetarianism, Society + Animals.

<sup>52</sup> Rylance argues that Alexander Bain’s textbooks were the most successful in the new discipline of psychology. He maintains that “for Victorian readers, its appeal was that of the new, the exciting, the controversial” (Rylance 2004, 241). Bain had the necessary authority as one of the few representatives of psychology who held an academic chair at Aberdeen (significantly in philosophy and literature).

unpredictable use of language that had no logical foundation. Brown's goal was to teach his students the detrimental effects of logical fallacies in argumentation.<sup>53</sup> In comparison, Brown's interest in mental science lay in the ethical and moral aspects of human reasoning whereas MacGregor's concept paralleled a contemporary trend for a more serious 'purely' scientific approach and his own enthusiasm for medical research.

Mental science provided students with a methodological tool kit for inquiries into the regions of what Bain called "scientific psychology" (Bain 1868, 2). Brown, Grossmann, and MacGregor taught their students structured thinking based on the conviction that the human mind (and brain) functioned on grounds of induction and deduction, and that aspects like intellect, will and feeling could be rationalised by an appropriate selection of logical instruments. At the same time, lessons in mental and moral science identified epistemological boundaries without yet fully recognising methodological differences of separated academic disciplines. Only by our modern standards does mental science in New Zealand appear as a melting pot or hodgepodge of disciplines; as a late-Victorian subject it stands for a transitional state from a humanist to a science-focused curriculum. Out of arguments about scholarly methodology individual subjects of the academe emerged. Mental science, to this extent, was the product of a society confronted with the challenging findings of Darwinism and resolved to harness the power of the unobservable through scientific methodology and in pursuit of that end, to exploit technologies of visual display as mediators of scientific proof.

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<sup>53</sup> Professor Hutton, in his 1888 lecture, likewise talked about the "fallacies" of old theories that inductive reasoning and thorough observation could have prevented. Twenty-first century American debating manuals still argue that fallacies are the one vice that should be avoided in any debate. The possibility of ruling out failures in argumentation, scientific or otherwise, still dominates theories of debate. Freeley & Steinberg 2005, 172-183.

## Conclusion

By the end of the millennium, the three New Zealand debating societies had changed the syntactic form of their debating topics from an open question into a motion. In 1883, the Dialectic Society at Canterbury College was the first to adopt the new form without much ado and with the intention to give debating a more professional and serious shape. In the same year, the society, for example, determined to automatically obtain the copyright for any essays presented to the society and that this “would be strictly enforced this session” (MBL, *minute book*, 21 April 1883) in order to create a coherent record of the society’s proceedings. The alterations in Auckland and Dunedin coincided with the introduction of debating tournaments which put forth propositions in the form of a motion. Debaters in Auckland unanimously passed a motion proposing “that in future subjects for debate should be framed in the form of a motion” in order to change the rules. In 1899, students debated the question “Is cremation advisable?”, to which they agreed (SCUA, *minute book*, 28 June 1899). After 1900, they were confronted with the more straightforward proposition “that Cremation is more desirable than Internment” (*OUR*, June 1901, 39). After hearing “arguments from science and fact” and considering the “sentimental aspect” of the proposition, the evening ended “in a comparatively easy victory for the advocate of cremation” (*ibid.*).

This alteration of the debating style in late-Victorian New Zealand marked the beginnings of modern debating forms under the influence of scientific argumentation. The transition from question-pattern to what Habermas’s terms *constative speech acts* amounted to a significant epistemological modification of debate as a means of negotiating different points of view. Habermas understands *constative speech* as a proposition with which “the speaker refers to something in the objective world, and in such a way that he would like to represent a state of affairs” (Habermas 1984, 325). No values should then be attached to the nineteenth-century proposition “that Cremation is

more desirable than Internment” (*OUR*, June 1901, 39); but from a modern twenty-first century perspective they are. The popular American *Debaters Guide* maintains that propositions in the form of “that ... ” relate positions of value: “That is, it is a statement that asserts the value or worth of something or that some course of action should be followed – some new policy should be adopted” (Ericson et al. 2003, 5).<sup>54</sup> As a consequence, the motion on cremation suggested to the members of the debating society that internment was the less advantageous form of burial and that cremation carried values that internment did not. In contrast, the question whether cremation was advisable, instead of demanding instant criticism, invited arguments on both possible answers: yes or no and left room for contemplation of values.

The introduction of these normative constative propositions was another level of transformation of nineteenth-century New Zealand debate into a formalised and publicly irrelevant form of discussion. Van Eemeren et al argue that today “the prevailing view is that argument is a distinctively *public* process. The point is not that reasoning or other psychological processes are unimportant, but that arguers are actors on a public stage, their performances are publicly available” (Eemeren et al. 1996, 199). By this standard, modern academic debate would score very low on a scale for public relevance.

Arguments in academic debate were not at all like Toulmin’s organisms; they were perceived as a mechanistic tool kit or apparatuses that could be adjusted to suit a particular cause. As such they reflected the scientific sentiment of the time. Debating propositions that were formulated in that-phrases instead of questions reflected the formalisation of argumentation that ironically abandoned the deliberative qualities of debate for a chance to state normative values. Hutton’s idea, that “by this means we get rid of all personal bias in observing” (Hutton 1888, 8), has proven, at least from a

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<sup>54</sup> Ericson’s et al manual is one of the most popular in America and in publication since 1961.

twenty-first century, unsuccessful. His belief, it appears, is proof to the force of fallacies and the prevalence of the unobservable in argumentative speech.

## **Conclusion**

### **Meeting Adjourned**

This thesis started out from the premise that collegiate debating societies in New Zealand were established in the belief that they would contribute positively to the development of colonial public discourse. Chapter one showed how literary and debating societies in New Zealand emerged from a context of mutual improvement. In Chapters two and three I argued that the practice of debating societies was replenished by notions of rational recreation that fused acceptable entertainment with desired forms of knowledge production. In particular, during the late 1870s and 1880s, collegiate debating was marked by a *laissez-faire* attitude that freely combined amusement with educative ideals about absolute universal truths. Students experimented with genres like poetry, drama and essay, and added features like *Olla Podridas*, mock trials and parliamentary debates. Scholars of rhetoric and logic like Richard Whately and Alexander Bain significantly influenced students' debating style. At the end of the century, students introduced nationwide inter-collegiate debating tournaments, which altered both the understanding of the role of the audience and modes of proceedings within the societies. The controversy over the instructive nature of debating competitions, for example, brought to the foreground essential differences in the perception of debate's educative potential. In this discussion, notions of individual success and community spirit were reconciled in an attempt to combine the idealistic educational standards of the 1870s and 1880s with the competitive spirit of the 1890s. Chapter six demonstrated that over the course of thirty years, collegiate debating was exposed to the influence of science, which prioritised the validity of an argument rather than the dialectical and rhetorical components of deliberation. Furthermore, for New Zealand's leading natural scientists, observation in experiment provided the basis for

the construction of reliable arguments. By means of this empirical emphasis, hypothetical argumentation was neglected in favour of inductive reasoning and debate became a means of testing and authenticating intellectual trends in colonial society. As a consequence of these developments, the societies gradually came to neglect their role as cells of opinion formation in the public forum. Throughout this thesis, I have applied the dichotomy of ideal and real to this gradual loss of discursive relevance demonstrating that societies were transformed into places where public knowledge was verified not invented.

### **The Bridging of Ideal and Real: Historical Scholarship in New Zealand**

The late-Victorian intellectual elite in New Zealand promoted an ideal of education which they firmly believed would elevate the mental and social life of the colony. Collegiate debating was established as a part of this ideal vision of colonial education. The country's environment and the strenuous realities of colonial life impacted on the cultivation of learning among the New Zealand's settlers. In combining full-time employment with their academic interests, students had constantly to negotiate a balance between the requirements of an academic ideal and their daily affairs. In New Zealand, the survival of Mental Science long after European institutions had separated psychology and philosophy was partly caused by a conservative insistence on an outdated arts curriculum based on a supposedly ideal academic world. At the level of debate, genres were combined to accommodate the high standards set by ideal rational discourse and actual instances of its performance. When Marion White deliberately exposed herself to the experience of a spiritualist séance in a closed room with a friend as her only ally, her scientifically-informed faith in "the real" allowed her to access the unreal and the irrational in a form that proved amusing despite its dubious setting. As



we saw in Chapter three, Arthur Norris, before joining the clergy in New Zealand, ventured out to South Africa to place himself in the middle of what lay outside the reverent and spiritual. Once in action, he freely digressed from factual, almost detached, descriptions of his bellicose environment to the real emotions of home aroused by a familiar religious tune. Scobie Mackenzie theorised about the ideal debater on the basis of his real and immediate familiarity with the colonial political arena. He put forth ideal notions of fair and non-vulgar deliberation to develop his version of New Zealand political eloquence. Thus physical experiences provided an opportunity to adjust the perception of settler reality. Debaters realised that ideal concepts were substantiated by events such as the Boer War.

In New Zealand, the war experience in particular made students sceptical about the desirability of audience participation and the reliability of the public's judgement. Students became aware that the "mob" was upon them and that argumentation had to be saved from the arbitrariness of public enthusiasm. The war also strengthened notions of competition and victory. In debate, New Zealanders' perception of the Boer War mirrored popular trends that contributed to the establishment of intercollegiate debating. The tournaments, like the war, promoted forms of athletic competition. As Chapter three revealed, the ideals of truth and educative value still served as a justification for staging debating competitions, but the presence of a winner and physical display of *esprit de corps* were the truly attractive features of the new form of debate. Prior to their emergence, students created forms of debating practice that gave rise to such hybrid-forms as Olla Podridas, when students recited and performed poetry but still voted on the most amusing piece. Mock trials likewise translated ideal procedures of advocacy into a theatrical display of jurisdiction. In 1902, Christchurch students spent an enjoyable evening in this fashion: "The story told by the injured lady and the

witnesses proved most entertaining, the order of the court being seriously imperilled on many occasions by the uncontrollable laughter of the audience” (*LT*, 19 May 1902, 5). The significance of an audience for students diminished in proportion to their experience with modern forms of popular entertainment. In reviewing the changing practice of student debate in terms of the relations between the ideal form and the actuality, this thesis shows that rhetorical analysis holds the key to understanding the essentially discursive nature of history in the New Zealand colony.

In the Introduction I pointed towards Gibbons’, Stenhouse’s and Reid’s contributions to a New Zealand historical scholarship that embraces a thematic and discursive rather than chronological and factual perspective. Some New Zealand historical works, while providing essential background material for events that shaped the colony’s future, do not venture beyond the familiar territory of chronological historical writing. Sinclair, Belich and Fairburn published general histories which evoke the impression that New Zealand’s colonial past is complete and is either understood in terms of nation-building processes, the dynamics of recolonialisation, or atomisation of the New Zealand public.<sup>1</sup> Admittedly, some of these scholars have produced significant scholarship that complicates the picture they create in these general approaches and take into account the relevance of settler communities within a global context.<sup>2</sup>

This thesis necessarily focuses on New Zealand’s intellectual history from a monocultural vantage point because of its subject that was mainly (though not exclusively) practised by young educated Pakeha in the colonial period. It is also inspired by the need to build on a shift of emphasis in colonial studies away from a national focus to accommodate the broader implications of debating culture in New Zealand. In order to provide a basis for further research, I decided early on to focus on the activities of a

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<sup>1</sup> Sinclair 1987a, 1987b, 1987c, 2000; Belich 1996 and 2001; Fairburn 1989.

<sup>2</sup> Belich 2003 and in his forthcoming book *The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-world*; Fairburn 2006.

small fraction of debating societies and to demonstrate how their members, as citizens as well as Victorians, made their way through the dominant ideas and historical events of their time. Nineteenth-century institutionalised higher education and research in New Zealand were the pet projects of a white European intellectual elite (Reid 2007, 186-7). Collegiate debating societies in New Zealand emerged from this threshold of British inter-colonialism and higher education and, consequentially, were dominated by a Pakeha worldview.

Other scholars have analysed New Zealand's past in terms of Pakeha culture and have set it into relation with overseas developments. Donald Akenson, for example, in *Half the World from Home* points out that a bicultural reading of New Zealand history "leads to a lumping of all white settlers into a spurious unity" (Akenson 1990, 6). Akenson shows that, despite cultural differences between Irish, Welch and Scottish settlers, they formed a "'British' culture" (193-5). This partly explains why Sinclair's thesis of a national identity is demonstrated without first taking a detour through notions of "fellowship", *esprit de corps*, terms like Anglo-Saxon and concepts like Akenson's "'British' culture." Debaters, for example, constituted a community on different levels. They identified with their debating societies, with their college, their country of origin, or New Zealand as the place to which they had migrated. Events of imperial dimension like the Boer War did not suddenly condense these different layers into one national sentiment. Moreover, political constructs like the Australian Federation affected New Zealand's public forum not only as a national issue but rather as a point of focus for public communication. National meaning was ascribed to these events by a political body that directed the affairs of the country. It would be overstating the case if the strategic actions of an administration were to be taken as a confirmation of a widespread nationalistic attitude. Similarly, settlers from Wales,

England, Ireland and Scotland did not generate a New Zealand national spirit once they settled in the colony; instead, they gradually created a concept of “British culture.”

Akenson’s study of these settler groups is complemented by Bade’s project that recalls the story of German settlers in New Zealand and Fraser’s research on Irish testaments made in New Zealand (Bade 1993, Fraser 1995). Brooking and Coleman also show that Scottish migrants had a diverse influence on New Zealand settler culture (Brooking and Coleman 2003). These studies display a diversity of European settlers’ loyalties and complicate the picture of Pakeha settler communities. Akenson, Bade and Fraser support the claim made in this thesis that New Zealand national identity did not immediately arise from participation in imperial endeavours like the Boer War or the Federation movement. At the same time, these studies of Pakeha colonial communities point towards areas of research that this thesis could not address.

One of these further implications surfaces when considering the bilingual background of colonial settlers. To what extent did the diversity of migrant backgrounds influence the practice of argumentative discourse in a New Zealand setting? Collegiate debating societies, for example, had some members with a bilingual upbringing. Oscar T.J. Alpers, for example, the son of Danish immigrants who proceeded to become a successful student of English under Macmillan Brown, did not speak a word of English when he came to the colony. Alpers was one of the most prominent members of the Dialectic Society at Canterbury College. Likewise, Heinrich von Haast, son of the influential German scholar Julius von Haast, was an active member of the Dialectic Society and educated bilingually. These two examples suggest that bilingualism and multiple cultural backgrounds led to a diversity of literary and debating societies that accommodated different languages. In the United States, Wiesepepe shows that Texas immigrants of German, Swedish, Norwegian and Danish

descent each founded literary clubs like Die Prairie Blume (The Prairie Flower) that enabled them to sustain their cultural heritage (Wiesepape 2004, 4). New Zealand's rhetorical culture possibly experienced a similar diversity of non-collegiate literary and debating societies that combined English discursive styles with those of other immigrant countries like Germany, Denmark or France.

The understanding of debating discourse is further expanded if a Maori-Pakeha perspective is applied. Relatively recent scholarship in New Zealand history adopts a bicultural point of view. Judith Binney is representative of this branch of scholarship.<sup>3</sup> She treats Pakeha and Maori as offering coexistent but also inherently different approaches towards recording the past (Binney 2001, 4). While her research shows that Maori histories merge Christian and Maori elements, she nevertheless does not consider nineteenth-century Maori and Pakeha conceptual worldviews as interwoven.<sup>4</sup> In the context of nineteenth-century debate, Sir Apirana Ngata remains the only known Maori member of the three collegiate debating societies. Prior to attending Canterbury, he obtained his secondary education from Te Aute College run by John Thornton, a Pakeha missionary. Even though Ngata was encouraged to cherish his racial background, the question remains to what extent Maori oral traditions influenced his debating encounter at Canterbury. On the one hand, considering his upbringing, Ngata was familiar with the traditions of *korero*. On the other, his prize essay *The Past and Present of the Maori* is a perfect example of Alexander Bain's teachings of paragraph structure and analytical argumentation. Binney discusses the "'in-between' lives" (Binney 2006, 93) of nineteenth-century Maori-Pakeha descendents. In her contribution to Ballantye's and Moloughney's volume she traces the biographies of several "individuals of dual descent" who "became important 'brokers' between worlds in late

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<sup>3</sup> Binney 2001, 2005, 2006, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Keenan, for example, develops a similar perspective in relating Maori histories (Keenan 2000, 41).

nineteenth and early twentieth-century New Zealand” (116). Applied to Ngata’s case, his rhetorical skills represent an instance of a Maori dual existence in two significantly different discursive spheres. Stafford and Williams show that Ngata in writing the poem “A Scene from the Past” “owns the corresponding Victorian forms, but is able to insert into them indigenous content. In doing so, Ngata is adopting the role of a Victorian scholar, performing acts of high-minded preservationism” (Stafford and Williams 2004, 36). Moreover, Ngata’s writing further defies categorisation because it “oddly echoes the practice of white colonial writers, also caught between worlds not easily accommodated to each other and aware of the distance” (33). Furthermore, influences of Maori-Pakeha terminology on the rhetorical culture were reciprocal and constantly shifting. The Auckland Girls’ Korero Club suggests that the Maori concept, to some extent, found its place in Pakeha debating culture. Like Alpers and von Haast, Ngata moved between two transitional discursive cultures.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, settlers of different nationalities endeavoured to establish forms and structures of exchange of discourse like literary and debating societies that accommodated their particular linguistic backgrounds. These examples of mono and bi-cultural contexts of debaters, not only in the academe but in the public forum of the colony, provide fresh perspectives on how the rhetorical culture of New Zealand might be further explored.

The dichotomy between the ideal and real further determined how argumentation was empirically tested by students. Attempts at bridging the divide did not end with the expression of their thoughts in the debating room or on the printed page of their college *Reviews*. Arthur Norris discussed the Boer war effort in a secure debating environment; he had physically experienced what the war was like, and returned with impressions that he put in writing and published for the benefit of his fellow debaters. Marion

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<sup>5</sup> I am aware and agree with Stafford and Williams that “[i]t is tempting, but dangerous, to discover analogies rather than the familiar binaries in the situations of colonizer and colonized; the processes are neither analogous nor opposed, but fluent and complicated” (Stafford and Williams 2004, 33).

White, in a similar fashion, discussed Spiritualism during her evenings at the debating society, then went to Australia only to relate her thoughts in writing to her student audience in New Zealand. The process of debate and argumentation was organic and occasionally permeated the public forum despite attempts to confine debate to competitive deliberation. Moreover, these discursive patterns of communication and contest within the overwhelmingly European intellectual elite suggest that nineteenth-century Pakeha communication was dynamic, in the sense of diverse, multi-layered and unstructured. While written documentation dominates historical research on Pakeha culture in New Zealand, debating societies make visible a missing link in the process of colonial knowledge production. Students' debates shaped discourse, as did printed publications. The story of nineteenth-century New Zealand is written in an inter-colonial web of written and oral discourse and close attention needs to be paid to both Maori and Pakeha rhetorical cultures.

### **A Final Word on Certainty**

Professor Hutton in New Zealand declared predictability the crucial test for the certainty of a scientific claim. At the end of the nineteenth century, students adopted a standard of scientific certainty that rendered debating discourse predictable. Susan Wells in coming to terms with Habermas's work observes that if science loses its epistemological claim to certainty, "[n]othing in the structure of political discourse, nothing external to it in the social world, nothing in the relations of speakers to one another, guarantees that in public discourse the better reason will prevail over the worse" (Wells 1996, 182). Wells maintains that in our post-modern world, science adopts a normative function and anchors discourse in the public forum. The beginnings of this global trend are visible in nineteenth-century New Zealand debate and in

American manuals of debate in the twentieth century. As late as 1947, Ewbank and Auer, for example, felt compelled to dedicate a separate section to the issue of “The Technique of Discussion and Debate and the Scientific Method” (Ewbank and Auer 1947, 15-22). They concluded that “the scientific method cannot be applied, *in toto*, in the solution of public problems. Rather, it is the discussion and debate technique based upon scientific procedures which should be applied to the democratic processes of social inquiry and judgement” (20). As a consequence, debate is regarded as an instrument of scientific reason in the public forum. Based on this line of reasoning, Pratt and Church in New Zealand can treat debate as an uncontroversial interactive means of democratic discourse that employs scientific evidence to convince its participants of some valid truths.<sup>6</sup>

While the fusion of debate and scientific method has advantages for public discourse, it also draws on the conviction that science will render deliberation more effective and that a combination of debate and science will secure a better representation of opinions in the public forum. In New Zealand, this conviction stems from the nineteenth-century belief that an argument constructed on the basis of induction was best suited for verifying propositions. Elster argues that this assumption might turn out to be an illusion: “It is far from obvious that the goals of optimizing representation and optimizing deliberation always work in tandem. In fact, it would be wishful thinking to assume that this is always the case: it is only by accident that one institutional arrangement will maximize two different objectives” (Elster 1998, 13). In the tripartite structure of debate—rhetoric, dialectic, and logic—the last gained ground and unduly promoted the unit of argument to the centre of deliberation. This resulted in

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<sup>6</sup> The Introduction began with Pratt’s and Church’s statements (Pratt 2004, 223; Church 2004, 159).



a perspective that was suspicious of the epistemological value of audience participation and debate practised outside the norms of “conduct.”

This caution regarding audience reliability was based on the ideal notion that rationality dominated the unity of rhetoric, dialectic, and logic. Cronje argues, and I agree, that “the synthesis of rhetoric with dialectic, and logic in argumentation has a *rationalising* function. When any one of these three functional aspects of rationality breaks down, all three break down (in mutually reinforcing ways). This breakdown, in turn, results in the loss of the binding and bonding force of claims” (Cronje 2002, 272). While Cronje’s statement is correct for a theoretical understanding of rationality, I argue that in nineteenth-century New Zealand debate, aspects of these three elements break down and re-emerge in a continual pattern of change. Earlier on, this thesis accepted Zarefsky’s call for a better dialogue between ideal and real readings of argumentative engagement. In this spirit, I believe that the combination of rhetoric, dialectic and logic provides a convenient ideal structure for rhetorical analysis but that the simultaneous existence of the three spheres is never fully realised in actual debate.

Between 1878 and 1902, students in New Zealand not once addressed these three aspects at the same time. The 1901 controversy on debating tournaments heralded the procedural advantages of the new mode but considerations of audience change and argumentative style never entered the discussion. During the Boer War and the time of Australian Federation, students became aware of audience as an incalculable aspect of public discourse but they neglected the idea that the argument itself exerted a considerable influence on audience behaviour. To be sure, ideas of audience, argument and debating procedure appear in students’ discourse repeatedly, but their unity in debate is imagined rather than real. In other words, a debater can strive to do justice to the three aspects of deliberation, but the actual debate will consist in the constant

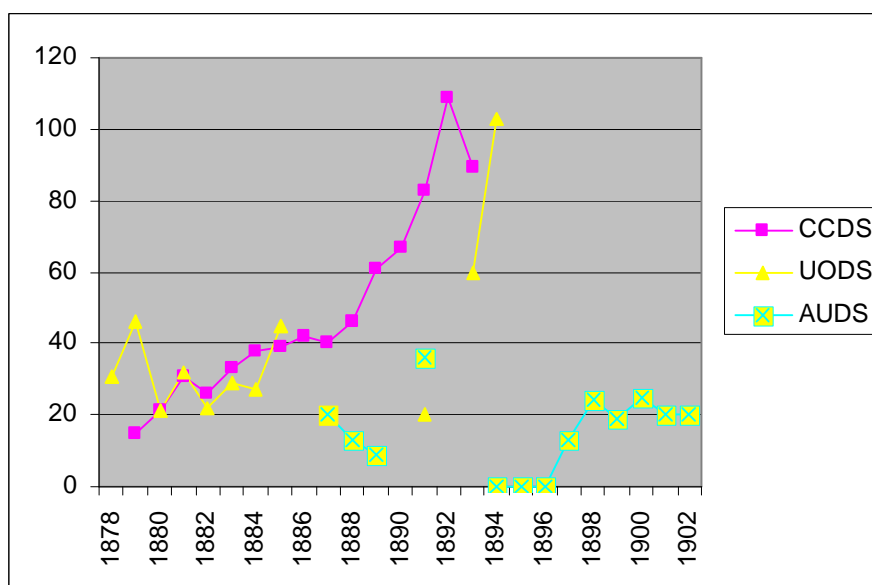
shifting among them and will possibly always cause “agitation” over an evening’s debate (Rose Ilbert, *diary*, 27 Aug. 1900).

As a consequence, certainty in nineteenth-century New Zealand debate was a regulative ideal that counter-balanced unsettling experiences of uncertainty and the unpredictability of discourse. At the same time, students’ early attitudes towards their debating adventure, in particular their efforts to combine amusement with rational deliberation, demonstrate that uncertainty was fully embraced: students leapt over desks to accept prizes or spontaneously added a few “vocal selections” (*OW*, 7 June 1892, 19) to the presentation of English poetry in the absence of the debater. New Zealand nineteenth-century debating societies represented a refreshing assemblage of idealistic as well as pragmatic attitudes towards their discursive genre; they moreover demonstrate that nothing is certain in discourse and that not even scientific methodology can remedy that fact. A strong desire for discursive certainty leads debate into the illusory category of normative discourse, when, in fact, debate itself is not normative but is rendered normative by the conditions under which it is practised.

## Appendix 1

### Attendance Figures

#### Collegiate Debating Societies, 1878-1902



YEAR	CCDS	UODS	AUDS
1878		31	
1879	15	46	
1880	21	21	
1881	31	32	
1882	26	22	
1883	33	29	
1884	38	27	
1885	39	45	
1886	42		
1887	40		20
1888	46		13
1889	61		9
1890	67		
1891	83	20	36
1892	109		
1893	89	60	
1894		103	0
1895			0
1896			0
1897			13
1898			24
1899			19
1900			25
1901			20
1902			20

## Appendix 2

### Habermas

#### Tripartite Structure of Argumentation

Discipline	Argumentation Levels of Abstraction	Argumentation Structure	Fundamental Intuition What is Argumentation
Rhetoric	Process	Delineates the general pragmatic presuppositions of argumentation as specifications of an ideal speech situation.	Aims at convincing a <i>universal audience</i> and gaining general assent for an utterance.
Dialectic	Procedure	Delineates a form of interaction that is subject to special rules and aims at identifying the better argument.	Aims at ending a dispute about hypothetical validity claims with a <i>rationally motivated agreement</i> .
Logic	Products	Contains arguments that are convincing in virtue of their intrinsic properties.	Aims at grounding or <i>redeeming</i> a validity claim with arguments.

### Appendix 3

#### Auckland University Debating Society

#### Debate: *Is one man, one vote a desirable measure?*

*Minute Book, 5 May 1892*

“A debate on the question ‘Is one man, one vote a desirable measure?’ was then opened by Mr. E. K. Mulgan in the affirmative. Mr. Mulgan pointed out that this measure generally follows on free education. He claimed that it is beneficial because it tends to elevate by growing responsibility because it increases the bond of fellowship between man and man and brings home to each that he is a useful unit in the community. He said that in England free education had been wrung from a reluctant government + now the people are demanding his measure. The restrictions on the franchise are growing less + less. Every individual as a unit should have a voice in the government and some control over the taxation and other such matters.

He admitted that it does give a share of the power to irresponsible persons but denied that the number is as large as it is generally represented to be. He claimed further that there is no good measure which could be substituted for the one under discussion. Plurality of votes based on a property qualification he characterised as another name for slavery. Its effect would be to debar many intelligent from taking any part in the affairs of the state. He admitted that the measure is not a faultless piece of legislation, but claimed that for honesty and fairness it is the best.

Mr. Tunks opened in the negative. He said that in a representative form of government while it is necessary that the representation should be as wide as possible, it is also necessary that the nature of the suffrage should be borne in mind. He pointed out that the quality of the government depends upon the quality of the representatives, + that again upon the way the voters regard their privileges and claimed that the suffrage

should be regarded as a sacred trust to be exercised for the good of the state + not as a personal right. Accordingly, it is the duty of the state to limit its possession to those best calculated to exercise it properly. He admitted that within certain limits all should have a voice but denied the right to an equal voice. He contended that those unable to read + write, drunkards, all who had within a certain time compounded with their creditors or become bankrupt + undischarged bankrupts should be excluded from the suffrage and advocated a plurality of votes based upon an educational, residential or property qualification. This he claimed had more of fairness + justice in it than to rank all men as equal when they are not.”

The majority of the members voted against the proposition.

## Appendix 4

### Auckland University Debating Society

#### Debate: *That the Influence of the Stage is and has been for good*

*Minute Book*, 30 June 1892

“Mr. Gillies opened a debate in the subject ‘that the influence of the stage is and has been for good’ He referred to the origin of the stage, pointing out that it had its beginning in the mystery and morality plays, which had for their object the religious instruction of the people. He contended that as a method of amusement, to relieve the tension of the mind from business matters, and as a means of instruction the influence of the stage is undoubtedly for good. Mr. Galway opened in the negative. He admitted the general attractiveness of the stage. He contended that there was a difference between the influence of the drama and that of the stage, though they may have had a common origin. The drama is a form of literature, the stage merely includes acting as a whole, and he contended that the stage has had a deteriorating influence on the drama. The drama is a very condensed form of literary composition very suitable for character study and requires great study; as acted it gives no time for study and is merely for amusement. Only such drama as is kept distinct from the stage had kept its merit. The stage excludes real character and so must present distorted and imperfect phases, and give us false notions. The more delicate phases for human life and character can be appreciated by reading but it is degradation to approach them in the way it is done on the stage.

Another serious objection is that actors are called upon to express feelings which they do not really appreciate and so live in an atmosphere of unreality.

Mr. Mueller concluded that the acting of plays was an inducement to study and aided the memory and is therefore educational. He said that those of decry the stage are

prejudiced. Because it has had a bad influence on some cases it does not follow that it is bad in all cases.”

The majority of the members voted in favour of the proposition.



## Appendix 5

### Otago University Debating Society

#### Debate: *Adoption of Academic Dress*

*Otago Witness*, 29 June 1893, 15

“An interesting debate took place on Friday evening at the fortnightly meeting of the Otago University Debating Society, the subject discussed being the adoption of academic dress by the students of the university. Mr T. K. Sidey, B.A., LL.B , occupied the chair, and there was a large attendance, upwards of 80 members being present. The leaders on the affirmative side were Messrs A. H. Adams and W. J. Strong, and on the negative side Messrs T. Coutts, B.A., and I. V. O. Bertram. Subsequent speakers were Messrs M'Nickle, Riddell, Strachan, Richardson, Platts, Bossence, Marshall, and Salmond. At the conclusion of the debate a vote was taken, which resulted in a narrow majority against the adoption of academic dress. Prior to the debate a short musical programme was gone through, a piano solo being contributed by Miss Barron, a song by Mr J. Montgomery, and a recitation by Mr J. Orkney.”

G.P. Howell, *Ourselves* (Prize Essay), 1893

#### Abstract

“The first debate of the year was well argued and keenly contested, and it elicited sentiments and speeches that would do honour to any society. Signs of honest feeling, of deep principle, of love of freedom, and of desire of patriotism, were exhibited by various speakers; and the whole debate was illuminated by spirited allusion, sarcasm, and intermittent humour. A goodly number of speakers returned with sharpened weapons and renewed eagerness to the conflict. Consequently the debate was of an extensive character, only a few minor questions being omitted, such as ‘Would gowns

inflict pain upon sensitive natures?’ For if they would do so it would be better to sacrifice personal appearance and the dignity of the awe-aspiring mortar board, than injure the feelings of a fellow-student, for care of the feelings of others is a mark of true *esprit de corps*. A considerable amount of earnestness was displayed during the discussion, and tended to enhance the interest. Nothing is so productive of spirit and liveliness as earnestness; nothing is so delightful to the audience as to become aware that the whole of the speaker’s soul is thrilling through his words, and making them flow, like the speech of aged Nestor, more sweetly than honey” (Howell 1893, 134).

## Appendix 6

### Otago University Debating Society

#### Debate: *Should Women be admitted to the Medical Profession?*

*Otago University Review*, August 1891, 87-8

“This Society has at last emerged from the condition of lethargy which was unfortunately its chief characteristic during the earlier part of the session; the first proof of its awakened activity being a debate on the subject, ‘Should Women be admitted to the Medical Profession?’ which was held in July 31<sup>st</sup>. This subject has more than ordinary interest to the students of this University in consequence of the action of the authorities with regard to the admission of ladies to the Medical School, and this no doubt accounted for an attendance much larger than usual.

...

The real business of the evening began with Miss Fraser’s speech. Miss Fraser combated the idea that women are unfit, either physically or mentally, for the work of the medical profession. She asserted the real necessity for women physicians, and attacked the conduct of men in reserving for themselves the lucrative occupations, while relegating to the other sex those which, though not less exacting, are less remunerative.

Mr Sidey maintained the opposite opinion, contending that he and his supporters had a higher ideal of womanhood than those who wished the professions to be the field for an indiscriminate competition between the sexes. He illustrated his position by frequent quotations, and made reference to the difficulties in the way of providing suitable medical training for women, as exemplified in particular by the case of Otago Medical School. Messrs Hendry and Little followed – the one in support of Miss Fraser,

the other of Mr Sidey; and in the general discussion which next took place, Messrs Baldwin, Mouat, Platts, Anderson, and Tennant were conspicuous.

On a vote being taken, it was found that a majority were in favour of admitting women to the medical profession; but a second division – the result of a suggestion by Mr Sidey – proved conclusively that the prospect of having lady medical students at the University is not viewed with much favour by the majority of students.”

*Otago Witness*, 6 August 1891, 18

“The subject for debate was, "Should women be admitted to the medical profession?" The affirmative was upheld by Miss Fraser, M.A., who was supported by Mr Hendry, B. A. It was by them maintained that both mentally and physically women are capable of performing successfully the duties of the medical profession. Messrs Sidey, B.A., LL.B., and Little, M.A., took the negative side, dwelling chiefly on the difficulty of providing suitable medical training for women, and on their physical disabilities for such a profession. Other speakers on the question were Messrs Baldwin, Mouat, B.A., Anderson, Tennaat, B.A., and Platts. When the leaders had replied, a vote was taken, with the result that it was decided that women should be admitted to the medical profession by the substantial majority of 21. On the motion of Mr Sidey, a division was afterwards taken on the question as to whether women should be admitted to the Medical School of Otago as at present constituted. This was decided in the negative by an overwhelming majority.”

## Appendix 7

### Intercollegiate Debating Tournament 1901

**Debate:** *That the modern spirit of militarism is not favourable to true progress*

*Canterbury College Review*, October 1901, 18-19

“Wednesday was cold and wet, and the three following days it snowed hard, so we were lucky in getting Tuesday so beautifully fine. On Wednesday most of us took the opportunity of going over the University and seeing what was to be seen. The debate duly came off in the evening in the Chemical Lecture Theatre. Dr. Marshall was in the chair, and the room was filled. After a couple of songs, the Chairman announced the conditions of the debater, and Mr. Gurthrie led off against us, moving ‘That the modern spirit of militarism is not favourable to true progress.’ The succeeding speakers were Messrs. Prideaux, Bedford, Scott, Hercus, and Hall, in that order. The judges, Dean Fitchett and Messrs. Wilson and Chapman, gave their vote in favour of Otago, on the ground of superior enunciation. There is no question that they were absolutely right in their decision. The Otago speakers paid far more attention to literary style, and took far more favourably with their elocution; and the result contrasted most favourably with our more colloquial, rambling, and careless style of arguing.”

## Appendix 8

### Auckland University Debating Society

#### Debate: *Should New Zealand join the Australian Federation League?*

*Minute Book*, 8 July 1891

“Mr. Parr spoke in the affirmative. He shewed the proposed constitution of the league and claimed that a Federal Senate could govern better than isolated parliaments. One third of the exports of N.Z. went to Australia and this under large custom’s duties. Federation with Free Trade would double the exports. Mr. Parr also shewed how foolish some ideas against Federation were, not sparing in his remarks, some New Zealand M.N.Rs, - Mr. Battley spoke in the negative. He contended that N.Z., not drawing any help from Australia, would not isolate herself by refusing to federate. The Senate would be a considerable distance away and some of our best men would be excluded by reason of expense. He also pointed out the difficulties there were in the way of a final court of appeal.

Several members including Messrs. Tunks and Meyers and the Secretary spoke. Professor Thomas then summed up and put the question to the meeting. There was a majority of two for the negative.”

*New Zealand Herald*, 9 July 1891, 4

“A meeting of the University College Debating Society was held in the College library last night. There was a good attendance. The secretary, Mr. Barber, made some announcements, and professor Thomas, who presided, called upon Mr. Parr to prove that New Zealand should join the Australian Federation League. He showed first what the constitution of the League was, and claimed that the Federation Senate could better deal with subjects that would come under its power than different Government could

do. He showed that one-third of New Zealand's exports went to Australia, and this under very large Customs duties. He claimed that Federation with freetrade would double the exports, and would help us as a wealth-producing country. He pointed out the mistake Newfoundland made in refusing to join the Canadian Federation League, and if New Zealand refused to join the Australian Federation she would be isolating herself, would leave herself open to all sorts of insults. Mr. Battley spoke in the negative. He contended that New Zealand would not isolate herself, because she did not draw any help at present from Australia, and she would not have any connection with England. He pointed out the difference in population, and that New Zealand would only be comparatively sparsely represented. The seat of the Federal Government would be a considerable distance from New Zealand. Our best men would be excluded by the expense and time occupied in attending Government. He also touched on the difficulties in the way of a final Court of Appeal. In conclusion he quoted Sir John Hall's statement when he returned from the Federal Convention that 'In the 1200 miles separating New Zealand from Australia there were 1200 reasons why New Zealand should not join the league.'"

## Appendix 9

### Auckland University College

#### *Marte Nostro: The Auckland University College Chronicle*

*Editorial:* October 1903, 1, no.2: 4

“And this is what usually happens at these debates. One student mounts the platform and discourses at length on a subject concerning which he probably knew nothing until he consulted the Encyclopaedia Britannica. His great endeavour is to use as little material as possible in the time allotted to him. Then a second student rises, uses the ‘you’re another’ style of argument for a few minutes, and afterwards proceeds to expound another limited view of the subject. A few other students rise in their turn and engage in a species of sham fight in which the comic (?) element predominates. When the audience have no more views to put forward, the two chief speakers wind up the proceedings by making dispassionate remarks about the other speakers of the evening and the debate is over. Every debate is the same. None of the students show any originality. The most they can do is to show a passing interest in the subject under discussion, and that interest is too faint to stimulate their brains to any activity.

Besides these debates, there are occasional Christian Union Addresses, which interest a few of the students, but the majority stand aloof.

...

Certainly, this year has been a little more exciting than usual. The Easter Carnival roused the students in a marvellous manner. It seems to have stimulated the active side of the student’s character, for there has been more interest shown in sports this winter than there ever has been before. But there is still room for a little additional interest in the general progress of the College. Perhaps, however, a few students will manage to



develop a little individuality during long vacation and give the rest of us the benefit of the year. To say the least of it, it would be a pleasant change.”

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**Author's Declaration**

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except where specifically indicated in the text.

.....  
Bettina Kaiser

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Date